

WEAK STATES AND CHILD SOLDIERING IN AFRICA: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

by

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DECLARATION

I, Magdaleen van Niekerk, declare that the work in this thesis is my own original work, that all sources have been accurately reported and acknowledged, and that this document has not, in its entirety or in part, been previously submitted to any university in order to obtain an academic qualification.

Magdaleen van Niekerk

ABSTRACT

Over the last forty years Africa has been one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world, resulting in untold human suffering. It has been estimated that between 1955 and 1999 some nine to ten million people have died as a result of violent conflict in Africa. However, those suffering the most in these wars are not merely the defenceless victims of conflict, but also its active perpetrators. More than 120 000 children under the age of 18 years have been forced or recruited to participate in armed conflicts across Africa. Although the use of children in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon, it has never been as widespread and as brutal as during the past decade.

Governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, security institutes and the media have conducted extensive research on the phenomenon of child soldiers, specifically focusing on the demobilisation and reintegration of child combatants. Surprisingly, not much research has been conducted on why particular states are more prone to utilise these little soldiers than others.

This thesis attempts to fill that gap by analysing the circumstances under which children are utilised as soldiers in Africa. This aim is divided into three subdivisions, namely to describe the type of states in which children are utilised as soldiers, to analyse the conflicts in which child soldiers are utilised, and to describe the socio-economic conditions that urge children to take up arms.

An analysis of the child soldier-phenomenon suggests that it transpires in weak states. These states exhibit very distinct characteristics, including serious problems of legitimacy, the absence of one cohesive national identity, the presence of opposing local strongmen, high levels of institutional weakness, economic underdevelopment, and a vulnerability to external international forces. The weakness of these states is created by the fragmentation of social control amongst various social organisations, which is in turn caused by the expansion of the world economy from Europe and also by colonialism. This fragmentation poses immense challenges to state leaders and forces them to adopt very distinct political policies, which put certain limitations on the process of state-making.

In response to this, leaders have adopted a number of social, political and economic strategies. These, together with the socio-economic conditions – specifically poverty – within weak states often create civil violence. These strategies include political centralisation, authoritarianism, ethnic politics, the manipulation of democratic processes and mechanisms, patronage politics

and the manipulation of state economic structures and policies. However, in order to successfully execute these strategies, rulers need wealth-creating resources, which usually result in the exploitation of scarce natural resources. Warlords and local strongmen also exploit resources to purchase arms to combat both government forces and opposing strongmen. In addition, large international private companies cash in on the financial advantages accrued from conflict. This leads to the formation of entrenched war economies. In the end then, these wars become an excuse to plunder natural resources for private enrichment.

A very distinct characteristic of these conflicts is the widespread use of child soldiers. All the armed groups in Africa's wars, including government armed forces, paramilitary groups and armed opposition groups, are to a greater or lesser extent guilty of recruiting, forcefully conscripting, press-ganging and deploying child soldiers.

However, states that utilise child soldiers all exhibit similar socio-economic characteristics. Poverty is endemic. Famine is widespread and magnifies the problems caused by war and poverty even further. The provision of medical and health care is insufficient because of the vast number of war wounded and the destruction of hospitals and clinics. This is also aggravated by the high numbers of HIV/AIDS sufferers. Schools are destroyed, educational systems are often poorly developed and illiteracy is widespread. In addition, due to years of war and civil unrest, millions of people are displaced and forced to become refugees. These socio-economic characteristics create the ideal breeding ground for the recruitment of child soldiers.

OPSOMMING

Oor die afgelope veertig jaar was Afrika een van die mees konflikgedrewe streke in die wêreld wat op onbeskryflike menslike lyding uitgeloop het. Dit is bereken dat tussen 1955 en 1999 ongeveer nege tot tien miljoen persone gesterf het as gevolg van die gewelddadige konflikte in Afrika. Maar diegene wat die meeste in sulke oorloë gely het, was nie maar net die weerlose slagoffers van die konflik nie, maar hulle was inderdaad ook aktiewe deelnemers daaraan. Meer as 120 000 kinders onder die ouderdom van 18 jaar is gedwing of gewerf om aan gewapende konflik regoor Afrika deel te neem. Alhoewel die deelname van kinders aan gewapende konflik nie 'n nuwe verskynsel is nie, was dit nog nooit so wydverspreid en so brutaal soos tydens die afgelope dekade nie.

Regeringsorganisasies, nie-regeringsorganisasies, akademiese instellings, sekerheidsinstellings en die media het uitgebreide navorsing onderneem oor die verskynsel van kindersoldate, en spesifiek gefokus op die demobilisering en herintegrasie van kinderkrygers. Verbasend genoeg is nie veel navorsing gedoen oor waarom spesifieke state meer gereed staan om hierdie klein soldaatjies aan te wend as andere nie.

Hierdie tesis poog om hierdie kennisgaping te vul deur die omstandighede waaronder kinders as soldate in Afrika aangewend word, te analiseer. Die doel hiermee word in drie onderafdelings verdeel, naamlik om die tipes state te beskryf waarin kinders as soldate aangewend word, om die konflikte te analiseer waarin kindersoldate gebruik word en ook om die sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede te beskryf wat kinders aanspoor om die wapen op te neem.

'n Analise van die kindersoldaatverskynsel dui aan dat dit in swak state voorkom. Hierdie state openbaar besondere kenmerke, insluitende ernstige probleme rakende legitimiteit, die afwesigheid van 'n enkele samebindende nasionale identiteit, die aanwesigheid van plaaslike sterk leiers, hoë vlakke van institusionele swakhede, ekonomiese onderontwikkeling en 'n blootstelling aan eksterne internasionale kragte. Die swakhede van hierdie state het ontstaan deur die fragmentering van sosiale beheer onder verskeie sosiale organisasies, wat op hul beurt veroorsaak is deur die uitbreiding van die wêreld ekonomie vanuit Europa en ook deur kolonialisme. Hierdie fragmentering gee aanleiding tot ontsaglike uitdagings vir staatsleiers en dwing hulle om onderskeidende politieke beleidsrigtings toe te pas wat weer sekere beperkings op die proses van staatsvorming plaas.

In antwoord hierop het leiers 'n aantal sosiale, politieke en ekonomiese strategieë aanvaar. Tesame met die sosio-ekonomiese omstandighede - en spesifiek armoede - skep hierdie

strategieë dikwels burgerlike geweld binne swak state. Sulke strategieë sluit in politieke sentralisasie, outoritêre oorheersing, etniese beleidsrigtings, die manipulerings van demokratiese prosesse en meganismes, die politiek van beskerming en begunstiging, asook die manipulerings van die staat se ekonomiese strukture en beleidsrigtings. Maar om hierdie strategieë suksesvol uit te voer, benodig die heersers welvaartskeppende hulpbronne wat gewoonlik uitloop op die uitbuiting van skaars natuurlike hulpbronne. Gewapende aanvoerders en plaaslike onderdrukkers plunder ook hulpbronne om wapens aan te skaf om sowel regeringsmagte asook opponerende onderdrukkers te beveg. Daarby trek internasionale private maatskappye ook voordeel uit die finansiële opbrengste wat uit konflik verkry word. Dit alles lei tot die totstandkoming van verskanste oorlogseconomieë. In die finale analise word hierdie oorloë bloot 'n verskoning om natuurlike hulpbronne vir eie verryking te plunder.

'n Baie onderskeidende kenmerk van hierdie konflikte is die wydverspreide aanwending van kindersoldate. Al die gewapende groepe in Afrika se oorloë, insluitende regerings se gewapende magte, paramilitêre groepe en gewapende opposisie-groepe, is almal tot mindere of meerdere mate skuldig aan die werwing, gewelddadige rekrutering en aanwending en ook die ontplooiing van kindersoldate.

State wat kindersoldate gebruik, toon almal soortgelyke sosio-ekonomiese kenmerke. Armoede is endemies. Hongersnood is wydverspreid en vererger die probleme wat deur oorloë en armoede veroorsaak is. Die voorsiening van mediese- en gesondheidsorg is onvoldoende as gevolg van die hoë aantal HIV/Vigslyers. Skole is vernietig, onderwysstelsels is dikwels onderontwikkeld en ongeletterdheid is wydverspreid. As gevolg van jare se oorloë en burgerlike onrus word miljoene mense verder ook uit hul huise gedryf en gedwing om vlugteling te word. Hierdie sosio-ekonomiese kenmerke skep die ideale teelaarde vir die werwing van kindersoldate.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ADF	Allied Democratic Front
ADFL	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaïre-Congo
AFL	Armed Forces of Liberia
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
FAA	Angolan Armed Forces
FAC	Congolese Armed Forces
FROLINA	Umbumwe-Front for National Liberation
HDI	Human Development Index
INPFL	Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MLC	Movement for the Liberation of the Congo
MNC	Multinational Corporation
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provincial Ruling Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
OLF	Oromo Liberation Front
PALIZEHUTU-FNL	Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People-Front for National Liberation
PDF	Popular Defence Forces
RCD-Goma	Congolese Rally for Democracy – Goma
RCD-ML	Congolese Rally for Democracy – Liberation Movement
RPA	Rwandan Patriotic Army
RPF	Rwandan Patriotic Front
RSLMF	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army

SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNITA	Union for the Total Independence of Angola
UNLA	Uganda National Liberation Army
UPDF	Ugandan People's Defence Force

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WEAK STATES AND CHILD SOLDIERING IN AFRICA: CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Over the last 40 years Africa has been one of the most conflict-ridden regions in the world, resulting in untold human suffering. Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought on the continent. In 1992 Africa was declared the most violent continent in the world, and in 1993 11 of the 26 major conflicts in the world were fought in Africa (Sesay *et al*, 2000: 44). In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries were afflicted by armed conflict, accounting for more than half of all war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than eight million refugees, returnees and displaced persons (Global Issues, 2001b). It has been estimated that from 1955 to 1999 between nine and ten million people died on the continent as a result of violent conflict. Of 48 recorded genocides in the world, 20 occurred in Africa.

A general characteristic of these conflicts is the large-scale use and abuse of children recruited as so-called "child soldiers". Although the use of children in armed conflict is not a new phenomenon, it has never been as widespread and as brutal as during the past decade (Stavrou *et al*, 2000: 35; Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, 1994: 23). In the past, the size and weight of weaponry limited children to supportive roles, but arms technology is presently so advanced that children are able to comfortably operate weapons such as the M16 and AK47 assault rifles. This means that an increased number of children could be more useful in battle with less training than ever before – a factor that makes them very attractive as recruits (United Nation Children's Fund, 1996a).

The Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2001b) estimates that more than 120 000 children under the age of 18 years have been forced or recruited to participate in armed conflicts across Africa, some of them as young as seven years of age. An example of the exploitation of child soldiers as a common practice, occurred in Angola's civil war. It has been estimated that between 1980 and 1988, every third child in the country had been involved in some military aspect of the civil war (Taylor, 2001). After the resumption of armed conflict in 1998, reportedly some 7 000 child soldiers were recruited to participate in the conflict. According to Penrose (2001: 10) "Angola is now well known as the worst place in the world to be a child." Similarly, there are more than 10 000 child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (DRC). In 2001, the United Nations (UN) estimated that 15 to 30 percent of newly recruited combatants were children under the age of 18 and a substantial number were under the age of 12 (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b).

An estimated number of 14 000 children have taken part in the civil war in Burundi, and the proliferation of military schools throughout the country, known as "training centres," has increased youth recruitment. In Rwanda, thousands of youths actively participated in the 1994 genocide, and the latest figures indicate that an estimated 20 000 children are currently active soldiers.

Despite claims by the armed forces of Liberia that children under the age of 18 are not recruited for military service, evidence indicates that all the warring factions have recruited large numbers of underage children. In Charles Taylor's days as warlord, his "Small Boy Unit" was renowned for its extraordinary bravery in the face of odds that would daunt the more cautious (Catholic World News, 1996; Hope for the Nations, 2002). During Sierra Leone's 10-year civil war some 5 000 child soldiers served among government and opposition forces and a further 5 000 were recruited to labour among armed groups. These forces usually relied on forced recruitment through abduction and drug use, and were responsible for exceptionally cruel and degrading treatment of children (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001a).

Thousands of children were used in the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Minors were specifically used on the front line to clear minefields for the regular army. In Uganda, the Lord's Resistance Army's (LRA) deliberate and systematic abduction of thousands of children is annihilating an entire generation (Amnesty International, 1997). This trend is also evident in Somalia and the Sudan (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b). However, reliable data and documentation are scarce and most armed groups, including government forces, deny the recruitment of children. Consequently, the exact number of child soldiers cannot be assessed and, therefore, they remain "invisible" (Twum-Danso, 2003: 12).

Most of these children are recruited or abducted from their homes and families at a very young age and subjected to a regime of extreme and arbitrary violence. Under the influence of alcohol and drugs, they loot, murder, amputate limbs, rape, and often kill and mutilate members of their own families and communities so that they have nowhere to return to. Those caught trying to escape are killed or tortured by their own friends – both boys and girls are brutalised by being made to kill other children. Girls are raped, forced into marriages and held as sexual slaves. These children are used as cannon fodder, marched over minefields to clear the way for armed forces and forced to fight in the front lines.

Governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions, security institutes, and the media have conducted some research on the phenomenon of child soldiers. Although this research covers various aspects related to child soldiering, its main focus is the demobilisation and reintegration of child combatants. Various procedures were identified to care for unaccompanied children, to heal the mental wounds of war, to embark on education for peace, and, ultimately, to stop the use of children as soldiers (Mausse, 1998: 10-13; Sesay *et al*, 2000: 55-60). International role players are also pressuring armed forces to stop this repulsive practice. Treaties governing the use of child soldiers include the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 2002), the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1977), and, in Africa, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Organisation of African Unity, 1991).

However, although this research and treaties cover a large spectrum of the problem of child soldiering, they merely address the symptoms, and often fail to adequately address the origins of the problem. The pressing question is: what are the characteristics of the African State in which the phenomenon of child soldiering occurs? Also, what kind of state permits and contributes to the use of child soldiers? The author believes that the inherent characteristics of these states provide a breeding ground for the recruitment and utilisation of child soldiers. Governments, NGOs, academics, aid organisations and psychologists would not be able to salvage the plight of child soldiers if they fail to identify and address these characteristics.

1.2 AIM AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study commences with the identification of a significant problem plaguing the African continent, namely child soldiering. It poses the important question: what are the characteristics of the African state in which the phenomenon of child soldiering occurs? This question focuses the aim of the study, namely to analyse the circumstances under which children are utilised as soldiers in Africa. The aim could in turn be divided into three subdivisions: firstly, to describe the type of states in which children are utilised as soldiers; secondly, to analyse the conflicts in which child soldiers are utilised; and thirdly, to describe the socio-economic conditions that impel children to take up arms.

In Chapter 2, the focus is placed on the framework of the weak state theory developed by, amongst others, Migdal (1988), Reno (1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001) and Jackson (2000,

2002). The status of the African states under discussion is measured against Jackson and Rosberg's (1984) empirical and juridical criteria and the differences between strong and weak states are indicated.

The identification and discussion of the characteristics of weak states are followed by an examination of the impact that the expansion of the world economy and colonialism had on the social structures within African states and the manner in which they altered the distribution of social control in their different societies. The focus is aimed at the fragmentation of social control, the consequent dilemma threatening the political survival of weak state leaders and the limitations this place on the state-making process in African states. Aspects such as the nature of the state that African rulers inherited at independence, the delayed establishment of institutions of democratic politics by colonial powers, the exclusion of Africans from the political sphere, and Cold War patronage are also discussed. Chapter 2 concludes with the notion that the African states in which child soldiers are utilised are characterised by weak political systems and governments.

Whereas the strategies weak state rulers employ to overcome the obstacles are discussed in Chapter 2, the socio-economic conditions inside weak states, and the consequent conflict they create, is the focus of Chapter 3. This chapter identifies the different role players involved in these conflicts and examines the relevant political, social and economic causes. It indicates that conflict is either an unintentional consequence of weak state rulers' strategies to maintain power, or it is the direct result of deliberate strategies designed to accumulate wealth. It also suggests a connection between poverty, weak state politics, and war economies, as both rulers and rebels need scarce resources in order to support and sustain their war efforts. In these wars, resources become the rewards for controlling the state.

Chapter 4 offers a perspective on the problem of child soldiering as a characteristic of Africa's conflicts, and identifies and discusses some salient factors that exacerbate conflict and, more importantly, create the conditions under which children take up arms.

This chapter argues that government and rebel forces forcibly recruit or abduct children as a result of a shortage of manpower and because they are easier to recruit and retain than adults. These children are subjected to varying degrees of intimidation through processes that use fear, drugs, brutality and psychological manipulation to achieve high levels of obedience, ultimately converting them into killers. They perform a whole range of domestic and military activities and are also often victims of sexual abuse.

Furthermore, it is indicated that widespread poverty and famine are prevalent in all the states utilising child soldiers. Inadequate educational systems and infrastructure entail children often being illiterate and unable to be employed. Elsewhere, poor medical systems and the spread of HIV/AIDS leave thousands of children orphaned and responsible for their own livelihood. Because of conflict millions of people are refugees or displaced. Such unfavourable socio-economic conditions render children extremely vulnerable and often drive them to become soldiers, as it is often their sole means of survival.

1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It is an assumption of this thesis that a correlation exists between the inherent characteristics of certain African states, and the use of child soldiers. It is thus imperative to identify these characteristics and, in doing so, to test the assumption of the thesis.

In light of this assumption, the study adopts as focus of analysis the “weak state” theory developed by, amongst others, Migdal (1988), Henderson and Singer (2000), Reno (1998) and Jackson (2001). This theory indicates that conflicts are exacerbated by a particular form of politics, which is embedded in the structures of weak states and the actions of weak state rulers (Migdal, 1988). Hence, according to Jackson (2001), “state processes – state construction or adaptation, ruling class formation and consolidation, patrimonialism and alliance creation – lie at the heart of internal conflict.” From this perspective, conflict is an inevitable occurrence in weak state politics.

This framework forms the basis of the study, shedding light on the occurrence of conflict in specific African states. An important characteristic and consequence of these conflicts is the usage of children as soldiers. In addition, the unfavourable socio-economic factors prevalent in weak states not only exacerbate the conflict, but also urge children to become soldiers, as it is their only chance of survival.

This study is *qualitative* in its approach. The propositions are in the form of themes, motifs and generalisations, and data are in the form of words and phrases from documents, observations and transcripts. Analysis proceeds by extracting themes or generalisations from evidence and organising data to present a coherent, consistent picture.

The study is also *comparative*, *descriptive* and *exploratory* in nature. It is comparative, as it draws comparisons between the different states utilising child soldiers and it is descriptive in as much as it presents a picture of the specific details of the problem of child soldiering in Africa.

However, it is mainly exploratory, as it endeavours to identify the characteristics of African states and their influence on the utilisation of child soldiers.

The universe of cases that is used in this study includes Angola, the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone. These specific states were selected for two reasons. Firstly, they are the only states in which child soldiering is currently practised or has until very recently been practised. Secondly, internal conflict is evident in these states, or has until very recently been evident. The only state that has made extensive use of child soldiers, but which is not included in this study is Mozambique, as its war ended in the early 1990s, and is thus not relevant to this study. The unit of analysis is the African State, and micro-level events are analysed in order to provide a macro-level explanation.

Research done by various governmental organisations and NGO's on the usage of child soldiers will be studied in order to establish a firm foundation from which to analyse the problem. Literature and data on African states will also be scrutinised to identify the various characteristics of these states. Considering that the study will also focus on development factors like poverty, hunger, per capita income, life expectancy etc., data from the United Nation's Human Development Index (HDI) will be an important source to analyse and correlate. Additional data will be extracted from Internet sources, published articles and papers delivered at conferences. Primary fieldwork is not included.

Many factors will affect the availability, comparability and reliability of the data used in this study. Statistical systems in many African states are weak, and statistical methods, coverage, practices and definitions differ widely. For these reasons, although the data will be drawn from the sources deemed to be the most authoritative, and verified with other sources, they should be interpreted only as indicating similar socio-political characteristics among states rather than offering precise quantitative measures of those characteristics.

1.4 THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The most important concepts, which will frequently be used throughout this thesis, are the concepts *state*, *weak state*, *conflict* and *child soldier*. Other important terms will be defined as they emerge throughout the discussion.

1.4.1 State and Weak State

International relations theory defines the concept state (as it is traditionally understood) in terms of five features. It is sovereign and has supreme power over all other associations, organisations, and groups; it is legitimate and recognised under international law as the fundamental decision-making unit in the international legal system; it is public in terms of its responsibility to make and administer collective laws, rules and decisions in the interest of the public or for common good; it is an instrument of domination and has the power and the capacity to enforce laws and punish transgressors; and it is geographically bounded to a specific territory and includes all the inhabitants of the territory, regardless of their citizenship status. Migdal (1988: 4) elaborates, stating that states have the capacity to “penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways.” He also indicates that this is not the case with all states, but that “strong states are those with high capabilities to complete these tasks, while weak states are on the low end of a spectrum of capabilities.” If one measures the African state in terms of its capabilities to complete the tasks identified by Migdal, one notices that a sizeable number of African states tend to fall into the lower end of the spectrum.

Recent and current post-Cold War studies increasingly focus on the weak state phenomena, which are also occasionally referred to as “soft”, “vampire”, “failed”, “shadow” or “collapsed” states (Reno, 1998; Reno, 2000b) and as state “dissolution” and “disembowelment” (Zolberg, 1992; Zartman, 1995; Kaplan, 1994). Although there are some minor differences between these various terms, they all refer in essence to the relationship between politics and corruption (Reno, 2000b). Since Migdal’s theory is used as the frame of reference for this study, the term he uses, namely “weak states”, will be the standard phrase used throughout this discussion.

According to Migdal (1988: 261) “the starting point for analysis [of the weak state] is the environment of conflict.” This environment of conflict exists between the ruling elite of the weak state and so-called strongmen, who co-exist in a fragmented society and consequently cause the fragmentation of social control. In other words, “there is a struggle between state leaders, who seek to mobilise people and resources and impose a single set of rules, and other social organisations applying different rules in parts of the society.” This opposition seriously restricts state leaders’ actions, as any serious effort to increase their capabilities would automatically undermine the social control of the strongmen. However, state leaders’ positions depend on the strongmen’s ability to ensure social stability, which they achieve through direct access to most of the population and their ability to mobilise the population for a specific purpose. This implies that state leaders do not have the ability to enforce social policy down to the level of the

individual and they thus have to employ strategies of “accommodation and persuasion” to obtain the cooperation of strongmen. This, in turn, leads to the exploitation of patronage systems, as especially funds find their way into the hands of strongmen.

Hence state leaders find themselves in the horns of a dilemma: if the leader builds strong state agencies in order to promote political mobilisation, he would simultaneously build a potential opposition. This is also the case when a leader concentrates coercive capabilities, employed to suppress destabilising factions, amongst a small group of security agencies. The agencies develop their own perspectives and come to pose a threat to the leader based on the means at their disposal. An effective counterweight a leader could use against threatening security forces is mobilising the relevant agencies. However, because of fragmented social control, the danger of a military takeover is acute. This has led in some instances to the formation of paramilitary forces falling directly under the control of the state leader. Another option open to a leader is to dispense with major institution building and to deliberately sabotage his own bureaucracies, distributing state offices to local allies to deny them to potential rivals as power bases. This is called a “policy of preemption” and is achieved through the “politics of survival” including strategies like the “big shuffle”, “non-merit appointments” and “dirty tricks”. However, a leader has to be very careful to restrain state agencies sufficiently so as not to pose a threat to himself, while allowing adequate organisation so that agencies could perform the tasks necessary for the state and leader to survive. In the end then leaders are more often concerned with defensive survival strategies than they are with building up the political institutions that would ensure and solidify a strong state.

Reno (1998: 1) agrees with Migdal’s theory that weak state rulers find themselves in a dilemma, stating that rulers of weak states “reject the pursuit of a broader project of creating a state that serves a collective good or even of creating institutions that are capable of developing independent perspectives and acting on behalf of interests distinct from the rulers’ personal exercise of power.” This means that, although weak state rulers face severe threats from strongmen and intense pressure from external forces to reform, they nevertheless continue to consistently destroy formal state institutions.

Furthermore, rulers also reject economic development when the probability exists that it may put resources into the pockets or within reach of potential rivals. As a consequence, a wide variety of economic roles are contracted to outsiders in order to impede the access to resources by internal rivals and to utilise the skills and connections of outsiders to harvest as much wealth as possible. This wealth is frequently converted into political resources, used as patronage to buy the loyalty of some, or used to buy weapons to coerce others. In addition, due to the

absence of effective bureaucratic state institutions, outsiders also fulfil political roles, for instance those relating to state security. This gives rise to the creation of very strong patronage systems centred on rulers' control over resources.

Consequently, the term of "weak state", as defined by Reno (1998: 2), "signifies a spectrum of conventional bureaucratic state capabilities that exists alongside (generally very strong) informal political networks." Furthermore, according to Jackson (2002) weak states display a variety of distinct characteristics, which are classified as follows:

- the broader population do not perceive weak states as legitimate and either refuse to participate in politics, or try to overthrow the government;
- there is no strong, cohesive national identity;
- rulers are threatened by local strongmen and the social control they exert;
- bureaucratic institutions are weak and in some instances non-existent, unable to effectively implement state policies and render services;
- economic scarcity, underdevelopment and dependence are evident;
- states are vulnerable to the intrusion of international actors and forces; and
- children are often employed as soldiers.

Agreeing with Migdal and Reno, Jackson is of the opinion that these weaknesses may be inherited from colonialism, but the blame could equally be placed on the Cold War superpowers and their patronage systems. This gives rise to the adoption of certain survival strategies pursued by weak state rulers who find themselves caught up in the dilemma described by Migdal. The most controversial strategy is patronage politics, where rulers typically use state resources to buy the support, loyalty and compliance of dominant groups in society, or favouring business associates by racketeering. Rulers also manipulate state economic structures and policies to the benefit of privileged groups and to control and discipline rivals. In addition, rulers also employ exclusive politics, political centralisation and authoritarianism in order to exclude certain factions of the population from participating in politics. Closely related to the above is the strategy of ethnic politics, which exclude certain ethnic groups from the political processes. Finally, rulers manipulate the democratic processes in their states to manage their structural weaknesses. These strategies create an extremely volatile environment in which a strong rivalry for control over the state and its institutions and resources take place. This inevitably creates an environment of conflict.

Hence one has to agree with Ayoob (1992: 64) that "state-making, the political variable of primary concern to political elites and decision-makers in Third World countries, must form the centrepiece of any paradigm we attempt to construct for the explanation of internal and external

behaviour of Third World States.” In other words, conflict in Africa is the “direct result of a particular form of politics that is rooted in the structures and processes of weak states” (Jackson, 2001).

1.4.2 Conflict

According to Mary Kaldor (1999: 2) a “new” type of conflict has materialised since the 1980s and early 1990s, which is characterised by a mixture of war, organised crime and massive human rights violations. Searching to define this new type of conflict she compares it with the “old wars” of the Clausewitzian school of thought. “Old wars” were conducted between strong states, which had effective monopoly of violence within their territories. There was a definite distinction between public vs. private, military vs. civil and war vs. peace. Soldiers were professionally trained under the supervision of the state and wore uniforms that distinguished them from civilians. Combat rules stipulated the relationship between officers and soldiers, the treatment of the wounded and prisoners of war and the protection of non-combatants.

On the other hand “new wars” are a paradox in every respect. States are weak, state power has disintegrated and their monopoly of violence has dissolved. There is no separation between public and private, military and civil and war and peace. Professional armies have disintegrated and been replaced by private security forces, civilian militias and bandit gangs who recruit child soldiers. Armed men no longer wear uniform and civilians are no longer protected by rules of combat. The main sphere of violence is no longer the typical conventional battlefield, but rather the village or the town centre. In this new environment civilians suffer the most, as 90 percent of the victims are non-combatants – predominantly women and children (Twum-Danso, 2003: 11). Furthermore, these conflicts have a tendency to be protracted with continuous escalations and de-escalations, causing the prolonging of violence and instability. A variety of terms are associated with these conflicts, for example small wars, limited wars, resource wars, post-modern wars and security predicaments. For the purpose of this study the term conflict will be used to include all the different types of conflict that are currently being fought in Africa.

A document published by the British Ministry of International Development (2001: 8-9), titled “The Causes of Conflict in Africa,” divides African conflicts, according to their characteristics, into four categories. The first type is conventional warfare, which is fought with regular troops, along a defined series of fronts, utilising expensive technology such as heavy artillery and jet fighters. Targets are primarily military and strategic in nature. The conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea was the only conventionally fought war in Africa during the last decade, while the

conflict in Angola could be classified as semi-conventional. According to a document published by Southern Links (2001), called "War and Conflict in Africa: A Bird's-Eye View", the scale of military engagements during the final stages of the Eritrean war could have been compared to some of the battles of the Second World War's North African campaign.

The second type, namely low-intensity guerrilla-style warfare – also referred to as factional warfare – is more fluid by nature, has no defined front line, and is low tech, mainly utilising small arms. This type of warfare is not too expensive and could be sustained without external aid. These conflicts usually proceed rapidly from the original cause to revolve around the exploitation of resources. An important aspect of this type of conflict is that it is usually the preferred choice of warfare of warlords. A warlord is a "leader of an armed band ... who can hold territory locally and ... act financially and politically in the international system without interference from the state in which he is based" (Mackinlay, 2000). Warlords are typically encountered in weak states where they challenge governments, pillage natural resources, dislocate and annihilate uncooperative communities and obstruct international relief and peace programmes. Warlords are not interested in capturing the state, but rather in the resources of the state.

The third type is genocide and ethnically based conflict. The distinguishing characteristic of this type of conflict is the rapidity with which genocidal attacks occur and the high degree of central organisation and planning involved. Although ethnic and genocidal fighting tends to be extremely low-tech using knives, machetes and small arms, it gives rise to a huge death toll, massive displacement, fear and confusion. A case in point is Rwanda's 1994 genocide and the ongoing genocide in Burundi.

Fourthly, the trend towards regional conflict continues. A large part of Africa, from the Sudan to Angola, including the Great Lakes and the DRC, is embroiled in a series of conflicts. The war in the DRC involves eight countries, while the DRC has sought to take the war back into Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. The war in Sierra Leone has acquired a similar regional dimension, as has Angola's prolonged conflict, while the conflict in the Sudan has also maintained its strong regional dimension. Altogether, 14 African countries are currently engaged in these four regional conflicts (Jackson, 2002: 29; British Ministry of International Development, 2001: 8-9).

The protagonists in these conflicts include both internal and external actors. The internal actors are government armies, armed insurgent groups, warlords, informally organised militias, drug cartels and criminal gangs. External actors include international capitalists and mercantilists, private military companies, humanitarian agencies and peacekeepers.

The objectives of these internal and external actors include traditional ideological and political goals, "chauvinistic ethno-nationalist" goals and, most importantly, economic goals. Whilst pursuing their objectives, these protagonists employ a variety of strategies, particularly human rights violations against civilian populations, for example ethnic cleansing, genocide, rape, mutilation and the use of child soldiers (Jackson, 2001).

1.4.3 Child Soldier

In order to define the term child soldier, it is firstly necessary to determine what constitutes a soldier. The Military Dictionary (South African Defence Force, 1983: 335) defines it as a warrior who draws military pay. The Oxford Colour Dictionary (Stevenson *et al*, 2001: 669) states that it is "a person who serves in an army", and the Reader's Digest Great Encyclopaedic Dictionary (Reader's Digest Association, 1979) adds that it is a "man of military skill and experience." To clarify this term further, the Geneva Conventions (International Committee of the Red Cross, 1949) declare the following:

"The laws, rights, and duties of war apply not only to armies, but also to militia and volunteer corps fulfilling the following conditions: to be commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates; to have a fixed distinctive emblem recognisable at a distance; to carry arms openly; and to conduct their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war."

When measuring child soldiers against these criteria, one finds that they seldom comply with them. Thus it could be deduced that they are not soldiers in the true sense of the word. Therefore, it would in actual fact be incorrect to use the term "soldier" when referring to children who participate in conflict. Consequently, it is necessary to find a more applicable concept. However, a discussion on the most applicable alternative for the concept "soldier" is beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently the term "child soldier", as it is understood and used internationally, despite its inherent inaccuracy, would nevertheless be used throughout this thesis.

The definition of child soldiers used in this study is formulated in the Cape Town Principles (Save the Children Sweden, 1997: 1), the result of an UNICEF symposium that was held in Cape Town in April 1997. It states that the concept child soldier refers to:

“Any person under 18 years of age who is part of any kind of regular or irregular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks, porters, messengers and those accompanying such groups, other than purely as family members. It includes girls recruited for sexual purposes and forced marriage. It does not, therefore, only refer to a child who is carrying or has carried arms.”

It is important to note that national armed forces as well as rebel groups are guilty of actively recruiting children. Such armed forces include the Angolan Armed Forces (FAA), the Burundian Armed Forces, the Congolese Armed Forces (FAC), the Ethiopian Army, the Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), the Rwandan Armed Forces, government allied forces in Sierra Leone, and the Ugandan People's Defence Force (UPDF). Rebel groups include the Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), Hutu opposition groups, the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (MLC), and the Congolese Rally for Democracy Liberation Movement (RCD-ML) in the DRC, the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) in Ethiopia, the Interahamwe in Rwanda, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in Sierra Leone, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda (Child Soldiers Global Report, 2001). These rebel groups do not only include insurgent groups, but also warlord networks led by warlords like Sierra Leone's Foday Sankoh, former leader of the RUF, Liberia's Charles Taylor before his election as President in 1997, and Somalia's Farah Aideed.

CHAPTER 2

THE WEAK STATE IN AFRICA

2.1 BACKGROUND

The deployment of children in times of war is a widespread and far-reaching problem. However, the investigation of the phenomenon of child soldiering in Africa leads one to the discovery that it does not occur in all African states, but only in very specific ones. When examining these states, identified as Angola, the DRC, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone, one finds the following common characteristics:

- they are often undemocratic in nature;
- governments are dysfunctional;
- election processes are exploited or flawed;
- there is insufficient accountability of leaders;
- governments lack transparency;
- checks and balances are inadequate;
- there is no adherence to the rule of law;
- peaceful means to change or replace leadership are absent; and
- human rights are not respected.

These also happen to be Africa's most politically and economically unstable states. They lack the capacity to govern; hence they are also called "weak". As stated in Chapter 1, Jackson (2001) suggests that the prevalence of conflict in Africa is the direct result of the structures and processes of weak states. Thus, in order to understand Africa's conflicts, one first has to examine the features of Africa's weak states.

2.2 DEFINING AFRICA'S WEAK STATES

In Chapter 1, the concept "state" was defined in terms of international relations and the following characteristics were identified: it is a sovereign entity with supreme power; it is legitimate and recognised under international law as the fundamental decision-making unit; it is public in terms of its responsibility to make and administer collective laws in the interest of the public or for common good; it is an instrument of domination and has the power and the capacity to enforce laws; and it is geographically bounded to a specific territory and includes all the inhabitants of that territory.

Jackson and Rosberg (1984) divide these characteristics into empirical and juridical criteria respectively. Empirical criteria refer to a government's monopoly on force, and the presence of a definite population, territory and boundaries. Juridical criteria refer to the state's sovereignty in the international arena, implying that a state has internal sovereignty, and that no external role players have the right or the power to interfere in the internal affairs of another state. According to Jackson and Rosberg's framework, many African states exist more in juridical terms than in empirical terms. Evidence to support this statement is ample: states are confronted with disputes over citizenship since separatist groups attract more loyalty than the state, as is the case with the Oromo and Tigreans in Ethiopia; borders are fluid and controversial, for example in Ethiopia and Eritrea; governments do not have a monopoly of force and are often threatened by armed opposition groups, such as in Uganda, Sierra Leone, the DRC, Burundi and Rwanda; and foreign debt, including being in arrears to the international financial institutions and developed countries, severely restricts their capability to operate as sovereign states (Osaghae, 1999: 184). This framework thus supports the theory that a sizeable number of African states are weak (Migdal, 1988; Reno, 1998; Jackson, 2001).

According to Jackson (2002: 38) it is possible to distinguish between strong and weak states using a matrix of social, political and economic factors. In essence, strong states are successful at state-making. Ayoob (1996: 38) suggests that this process includes three aspects, namely war, policing and taxation. Thus – as indicated in Chapter 1 – strong states have the capacity to “penetrate society, regulate social relationships, extract resources, and appropriate or use resources in determined ways” (Migdal, 1988: 4). To be more specific, this refers to the willingness and capability of a state to uphold social control, ensure civil adherence to official laws, render basic services, develop effective policies, safeguard stability and cohesion, encourage civil participation in state institutions, regulate and direct the national economy, act decisively, and preserve legitimacy. “Strong states also possess high levels of socio-political cohesion that is directly correlated with consolidated participatory democracies, strong national identities and productive and highly developed economies” (Jackson, 2002: 38).

Weak states, on the other hand, have very distinct features that distinguish them from strong states. Firstly, they face serious problems of legitimacy characterised by unconsolidated or non-existent democracies, inconclusive or stage-managed elections, a lack of national support for government, very low political participation rates, high levels of disengagement by important sections of the population, the utilisation of coercion to ensure compliance, unstable politics involving riots, rebellions, plots and coups, and severe social divisions along ethnic and religious lines. This lack of legitimacy forces the centralisation of power in a ruling elite, who often creates elaborate patronage systems to ensure political control (for example, over scarce

and valuable resources) in an unstable environment (Jackson, 2002: 39). The inability of the state to distribute resources equally and fairly as a public good, exacerbates the problem of legitimacy, as the members of the excluded groups are not loyal to the government and are often prompted to oppose or challenge the state (Osaghae, 1999: 191).

Secondly, weak states suffer from a lack of cohesive national identity. According to Jackson (2002: 39) this dates back to their emergence into juridical statehood. The typical African state introduced by the colonial powers was a foreign concept forced onto an arbitrarily defined territorial unit. On becoming independent, these territories received formal sovereignty, or juridical independence, long before a cohesive national identity could develop. Osaghae (1999: 184) observes that in practice this lack of national identity was, and still is today, characterised by the tendency of citizens to rather affiliate with ethnic, racial, religious and regional organisations than to identify with and display loyalty to the state.

The third feature of weak states, which is further discussed in the latter part of this chapter, is the presence of local strongmen who exercise social control over segments of the populations who are nominally under state leaders' rule. These strongmen oppose rulers and the latter's efforts to mobilise the population and resources under the former's control. Consequently, leaders are unable to enforce social policy down to the level of the individual and to impose a single set of rules, as this would automatically undermine the social control of the strongmen. This creates an environment of conflict, which often escalates into full-scale civil war (Migdal, 1988: 261).

Fourthly, colonialism created a tradition of state intervention in almost every sector of the economy. Over time, interventionism inevitably surpassed the state's administrative capacity, causing, among other things, varying levels of institutional weakness and the lack of capacity of government to implement policies. This led to the corrosion of judicial and regulatory functions – notably because of arbitrary political interference and insufficient provision of public services (Cornwell, 1999: 68; Baker, 1999).

High levels of corruption, personal rulership and the absence of democratic rule and principles of transparency and accountability often intensify the problem. Due to weak states' under-resourced and underdeveloped institutional capacity, they experience tremendous obstacles in mobilising the population and managing civil society. They are also unable to effectively establish or expand their authority over large parts of the country, specifically areas that are separatist, and sections of national life, such as the effective guarding of national boundaries, tax collection, customs duties, and law enforcement (Osaghae, 1999: 184; Jackson, 2002: 39).

According to Reno (1998: 2) this virtually total absence of bureaucratic state institutions means that outsiders assume a larger variety of political roles traditionally reserved for state institutions, for example the provision of internal security.

Another distinct feature of weak states that distinguishes them from strong states, is economic underdevelopment. According to Jackson (2002: 39) these states have “poorly integrated mono-economies, heavy debt burdens, low or negative growth rates, high inflation and unemployment, low levels of investment, and massive social inequalities.”

However, this does not necessarily mean that there is an absence of economic activities – quite the contrary. Reno (1995: 1) observes that weak states very often have strong and efficient informal markets that function parallel to the more formal and inefficient markets. Weak state leaders manipulate these informal markets to their full potential, as these provide the resources and political support they need to ensure lasting political authority. This occurs at the expense of the credibility and competence of the very state in which they hold office. The manipulation of these markets involves a whole range of activities, including granting loyal associates access to economic opportunities and assisting foreigners who wish to conceal their illegal business transactions, for instance money laundering. A very important aspect of the manipulation of markets is leaders’ exploitation of scarce resources. Leaders use these resources to finance their own operations, whether suppressing warlords and rebellious populations, or enriching themselves and their cronies. This enables rulers to build a strong network of national and international commercial contacts with which business could be conducted (Reno, 2001).

Reno (2001: 5) identifies another feature of weak states, namely the use of child soldiers. Since these children are themselves subject to the collapse of formal economies and state institutions, they are desperate for ways to solve their personal predicament. Reno (2001: 6) states that “they are often the most vigorous segments of most societies, yet also the most marginalised in collapsing economies in corrupt states.” Consequently, they exploit warfare in order to remedy their marginal status and enrich themselves. They also have the perception that it is safer to be associated with those bearing guns, than to be their victims.

The last main feature of weak states is their vulnerability to external international forces and actors. This implies that they are easily manipulated from outside their borders and are dependent on the industrialised countries for technology and manufactured goods imported at outrageous prices. Because of this dependence, industrialised countries and even multinational corporations (MNCs) have immense political and economic leverage over these states. For

example, economic structural adjustment programmes – typically prescribed by the International Monetary Fund – compel politically unstable or undemocratic states to comply with democratic political and liberal economic conditionalities. Another aspect where this external vulnerability could be observed is the susceptibility of weak state borders to arms smuggling and refugee movements (Jackson, 2002: 39).

The question arises: why do state capabilities vary? Why are some states strong, while others are weak? What caused such a high number of African states to become, on the one hand, giant organisations – employing thousands of workers and channelling vast amounts of revenue – but on the other hand, failing to provide policies determining the daily conduct within the societies they claim to rule? The following discussion will address these questions.

2.3 WEAK STATES AND SOCIAL CONTROL

According to Migdal (1988) the abilities and natures of contemporary African states are influenced by their social structures, and the manner in which social control is distributed in their different societies. This implies that one has to shift one's focus beyond the managerial ability of rulers and administrators and the tools and resources they employ, to the vast number of social organisations that surround and influence the state. In cases where these social organisations are web-like – in other words, where social control is fragmented amongst various organisations – states are confronted by immense obstacles in establishing and enforcing effective policies.

Migdal is of the opinion that these social organisations and the social control they exercise did not emerge by coincidence. They were the consequence of two series of interrelated forces that radically changed many African societies during the nineteenth century. The first series refers to the expansion of the world economy from Europe and its influence on all levels of society, whilst the second series of forces concerns colonialism and the consequent creation and maintenance of Western political domination in the imperial age. These forces caused immense political, economic and social change and irrevocably altered the nature of these societies.

2.3.1 Expansion of the World Economy

It would be incorrect to assume that the expansion of the world economy had only economic repercussions. The process also had immense political consequences, since it initiated the creation of government policies that intentionally undermined existing strategies of survival and

social control in societies. This was certainly the case in Africa, where taxation and transportation policies paved the way for European market penetration, rendering established strategies of subsistence obsolete. For example, new taxation policies imposed by the colonial powers changed the very nature of production, since it compelled Africans to increasingly focus on export crops at the expense of their own subsistence crops (Migdal, 1988: 51). However, these taxes could often not be legitimised, as many traditional societies produced their own public services, for example finances and security, within smaller communities (Kivimäki, 2001: 17).

Forced labour was also employed as a direct form of taxation or as a result of other types of taxation. For instance, in order to employ cheap native labour, the colonialists imposed high taxes on the natives and non-payment was punished by means of forced labour. Through the implementation of these various taxation policies, the colonial powers could legally force Africans to construct railways and other infrastructure and also to perform seasonal work at commercial plantations. The consequences of these tax policies – which included migration, forced labour and production for export – had an immense impact on existing structures of social control (Migdal, 1988: 51, 97).

It was not only the new tax policies that exercised an influence on social organisations. New modes of transport, and more specifically the construction of railways, triggered a strong economic revolution, causing tremendous social change and the subsequent weakening of old customs of social control. It had, for instance, a detrimental affect on agriculture, as the greater economies of scale rendered the products of small-scale farmers uncompetitive. Consequently, many small-scale farmers lost their land and their only means of income (Migdal, 1988: 79).

New tax policies and modes of transport brought about an almost unimaginable transformation in people's lives, as their most fundamental life conditions, including their homes and work, no longer existed. These circumstances not only changed the particular forms of social control that used to exist in societies, but it also widened the stratification gap within African states. In other words, those members of society who had access to resources that could help them exploit the new economic opportunities, were in the fortunate position to control the productive factors in society. This had direct repercussions for people's social and political lives – their place of residence, their occupation and the nature of agricultural organisation – and severely undermined their traditional forms of survival. This in turn sparked the process of urbanisation, causing large numbers of people to change their place of residence, and generating new job opportunities, especially in the service sector. In addition, old strategies of survival – for example subsistence agriculture and handicraft production – were made obsolete by land

alienation and by new manufactured products, derived from plantation economies. This, however, was not an easy feat, as the number of people displaced from old types of employment far exceeded the number of available positions in new enterprises. The situation was further aggravated by the explosion of African populations following the colonial powers' pacification efforts as well as the institution of Western public health measures (Migdal, 1988: 81-83).

It is evident that the expansion of the world economy and the policies that facilitated the incorporation of African societies into the European-dominated world economy had an unanticipated and radically transforming effect on people's social relations. As people's life situations changed, so did their needs and problems, causing old means, rewards, sanctions and strategies of social control to become obsolete, thus spawning the overall weakening of societies. For instance, as modes of production were modernised and people lost their land, existing and well-known rewards – such as profiting from mutual work teams to harvest specific crops – became irrelevant. In addition, people commuted to work, migrated from their villages and made new friends, rendering old sanctions like community ostracism or gossip meaningless. This was also the case with old mechanisms of resolving disputes, for example through the mediation of the village elders, as interaction with people who did not know or honour the elders, increased. Consequently social control had to be restored, and it is not surprising then that new patterns of social control started to surface immediately. This atmosphere of rapid change caused the various societies to act in different ways, explaining to a certain extent the varying capabilities among contemporary developing states (Migdal, 1988: 86-98).

However, the Western-dominated market and the state policies that facilitated the deepening of that market was not the only event that influenced African states' social organisations and the social control they exercised. The second set of forces that radically influenced the national social structure and the reconstruction of social control in many African societies was associated with the establishing and preservation of political domination, mainly through the political strategies of colonial powers (Migdal, 1988: 51).

2.3.2 Colonialism

Osaghae (1999: 185) is of the opinion that most African states were created by colonial powers in the interest of their colonial enterprise and not in the interest of the colonised African populations. Through the process of colonisation, the people of sub-Saharan Africa were confronted with a multitude of new experiences that exposed them to new reference groups and

overthrew old patterns of stratification. In the short historical interval of approximately 80 years, the myriad civilisations and cultures of Africa were arbitrarily united into more or less 50 states, without consideration for ethnic affinities and historical political boundaries. Hence several nations were divided across new boundaries under various colonial authorities, while previously hostile communities were grouped together in the new states.

A pressing need for low-cost but effective social control, as well as the fear of granting any native leaders a potentially threatening monopoly of control, impelled colonial governors to offer both tangible and intangible resources to strongmen. In order to establish the rules and to manipulate the makers of the new social control, colonisers could follow two paths. They could either make preferential access to resources available to various native leaders who could establish social control in only a limited part of the society, or they could support indigenous rulers who were in a position to build nationwide institutions, which could lead to a centralised state. Since colonial objectives of stability and security could be better achieved through policies that constructed and maintained a fragmented, web-like society with diverse poles of power, colonial powers distributed resources amongst a large number of indigenous rulers, dividing the area and inhibiting the creation of any bond of local solidarity. The comprehensive resources available from outside, convinced rulers that the expensive, potentially destabilising creation of centralised social control was unnecessary and in all likelihood dangerous (Migdal, 1988: 125-132).

However, the colonising powers were very concerned with who precisely benefited from their rule, as the specific pattern of native social control, which existed in the governed society, strongly influenced the colonial rulers' ability to maintain secure rule. Alliances with indigenous strongmen had to be considered carefully, since rulers relied heavily on social organisations for implementing policy and maintaining internal order. Thus colonial rulers determined who among the indigenous figures would reap the benefits of the spreading world market, granting them the opportunity to reconstitute social control in the wake of the catastrophic changes (Migdal, 1988:106).

Naturally, this caused radical changes in the basis of social control. Since a Chief's power no longer depended on his role as warrior and military protector of his people, as was previously the case, some Chiefs who had no former claim on leadership suddenly found themselves in leadership positions thanks to Western backing and support. Once certain native strongmen successfully implemented new strategies of survival, it was very difficult to significantly change the configuration of social control in the specific society. Consequently, many of the Chiefs'

subordinates openly resented the highly prized resources and privileges bestowed on these leaders, as it was of great value in the new money economy (Migdal, 1988: 105, 111).

By pouring resources into the administrative arrangements and organisations of selected strongmen, the colonialists influenced the emerging configurations of social life. Consequently, after independence social control remained entrenched in social organisations other than the state. Politics did not include state autonomy, the dominance of a single class, enforcement of social policy down to the individual level, or even social control and mobilisation. To the contrary, it exhibited diverse acts of compromise, manipulation and bribery. Although the military was a useful tool in bringing discipline to politics and securing single party domination by restraining factional strife and the struggle for control of the state, armies and parties could in effect not change the arrangement of social control throughout societies. It is no surprise then that control of the state was fiercely contested (Migdal, 1988: 130, 137).

2.3.3 Fragmented Social Control and State Leaders' Dilemma

In order to understand the restriction of state leaders' capabilities, which had been caused by the concentration of social control outside of the state mechanisms, one has to focus on the interrelationship between the indigenous population and the strongmen in remote towns and villages. No single strongman had the ability to successfully rebel against the power of state leaders. However, the sum total of the different strongmen's power in their various communities could paralyse state leaders' efforts to increase state capabilities. Rulers could counter these debilitating circumstances with either one of two measures. Firstly, extreme mechanisms could be employed, for instance the replacement of certain strongmen. However, actions of this kind were dangerous, and could only be utilised very selectively and cautiously, as effective social control resided in the hands of the strongmen, limiting the mobilisation capabilities of the state. A second, more frequently used measure of countering the influence of strongmen's social control, manifested itself when funds and resources found their way into private hands, most notably those of local strongmen (Migdal, 1988: 138).

Thus the colonial powers' practice of directing resources into the hands of certain indigenous strongmen, while enforcing sanctions to the detriment of others, profoundly affected the reconstitution of social control in indigenous communities. It presented scattered indigenous strongmen with the means to build their own social control in fragments of the society. After independence, this fragmentation of social control seriously limited the creation and growth of state capabilities. Despite the fact that state leaders had all the resources at their disposal and could eliminate every single strongman, they still faced immense restrictions. On the one hand,

any significant attempt to expand their capabilities, for example to penetrate society, to govern social relations and to distribute resources, would surely undermine the various strongmen's autonomy and basis of social control. On the other hand, however, indigenous strongmen had direct access to the various parts of the population they ruled and they could mobilise these people for specific purposes. Consequently state leaders came to the realisation that their tenure was heavily dependent of the social stability the strongmen could ensure through their social control (Migdal, 1988: 141).

Why is social control and its fragmentation such a crucial aspect for state leaders? To answer this question one first has to look at the important role played by effective state institutions. The proper utilisation of state agencies is essential for a state leader's effectiveness and his ultimate political survival. The employment of those agencies for mobilisation and security is particularly important in that the mobilisation of human and material resources is essential for accomplishing the state leader's objectives, whilst security agencies are called on to maintain national security and defend the state against external aggressors. In view of these explicit internal and external demands for strong state apparatus, creating strong state institutions is not merely an abstract objective, but an urgent reality. Nevertheless, ironically one still finds that state leaders with very limited mobilisational capabilities destroy the very state institutions that could grant them mobilisational capabilities and enhanced security (Migdal, 1988: 207).

Just as effective state institutions influence political mobilisation, so does fragmented social control also impact on this process. Societies with a variety of divergent social organisations, each having its own rulemaking abilities, strongly oppose leaders' attempts to utilise the state as a mechanism of sustained political mobilisation. As long as indigenous strongmen continue to render feasible strategies of survival to members of their immediate societies, state leaders are able to secure only limited public support, as the population has very little motivation to grant such support. Consequently the only way for leaders to achieve sustained political mobilisation is when they, in turn, are capable of providing viable strategies of survival to the population. This calls for a comprehensive set of strong state agencies to distribute material incentives and to arrange state services in a meaningful set of symbols (Migdal, 1988: 207-211).

Thus state leaders face a baffling paradox. On the one hand, they need to have strong state agencies in place to induce political mobilisation and support in fragmented societies. On the other hand, it is necessary to mobilise the population so that those same strong state agencies will not threaten their political survival as state leaders. This is the dilemma of a number of state leaders in Africa. The situation could aggravate when concerns about internal and external destabilising factors urge leaders to centralise coercive capabilities in the hands of only a small

group of state agencies. Considering the means at their disposal, these state agencies themselves pose a significant threat to state leaders. The only mechanism a leader could employ to counter these threats from military and security forces arises through mobilising agencies. Yet, in societies with fragmented social control, the mobilising capabilities of these agencies are restricted, intensifying in turn the danger of a military coup (Migdal, 1988: 207-210).

This paradox prompts state leaders to engage in a risk analysis, measuring their need for effectiveness and security against the threat strong state agencies and potential power centres hold to their own political survival. This implies, on the one hand, that rulers could proceed with building state agencies, weighing various strong agencies against one another, and thus preventing any one of them from accumulating significant power. On the other hand, they could forgo major institution building and concentrate on prohibiting the emergence of power centres, particularly those with their own mobilisational capabilities. In the latter instance, state leaders choose to decrease the immediate threats to their political survival by jettisoning the goal of building efficient political mobilisational capabilities (Migdal, 1988: 211-213).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this dilemma – fragmented social control and the subsequent denial of mobilisational capabilities to state leaders – has created a very specific political and administrative style of ruling, referred to by Migdal (1988: 213) as the “politics of survival”. Some of the most popular means of the politics of survival involve the following strategies:

- “big shuffle”, where leaders use their power to appoint and remove members from office to prevent state agencies or state-sponsored political parties from becoming threats to the executive leadership;
- “non-merit appointments”, where leaders use kinship ties, common regional origins, and shared ethnic and tribal backgrounds to appoint personnel in key posts; and
- “dirty tricks”, which refer to unlawful imprisonment and expatriation, mysterious disappearances, torture and execution.

The purpose of these strategies is to prevent leading officials in important agencies from using their own capabilities against the central state leadership. However, leaders are restricted in their use of these tactics and a fine balance has to be maintained. State agencies have to be restrained to prevent them from posing a threat to the leader, while these same agencies have to be allowed to perform the tasks necessary for state and leader survival. If successful, the politics of survival could lead to the extended existence of regimes and particular leaders. However, on the down side, this has prevented the state from enhancing its capabilities by not

allowing the development of effective state institutions, causing institutional weakness in many African states.

State leaders' tenure is not only threatened by internal state agencies, but also by the existence of power centres outside of formal state institutions, which have their own independent mobilisational capabilities and distinct viewpoints of the types of rules that society may need. The management of these threats depends on the size and scope of the social organisation. Organisations with a limited scope and small body of supporters – such as those ruled by local strongmen in rural areas – pose a limited threat to state leader's political survival. Although the aggregate of social control that indigenous strongmen exercise, prevents leaders from expanding the state's mobilisational capacity, the threat posed by any single strongman is negligible. Consequently the same fragmentation of social control that prevents state leaders from developing the state's mobilisational capabilities, also assists them in terms of stability by restricting the creation of common social identities and frameworks comprehensive enough to develop into strong social organisations that could challenge state leaders' rule (Migdal, 1988: 227).

However, the situation may be completely different for large social organisations with a broader scope than that of indigenous strongmen. Leaders of weak states often harbour a similar kind of fear relating to the mobilisational capabilities of these organisations than they have *vis a vis* powerful state institutions. Rulers have three distinct mechanisms at their disposal to deal with the threats posed by these societal power centres. Firstly, rulers may employ "dirty tricks", for example the execution of political activists and political party leaders. However, this method can only be used to a limited degree. Because rulers have severed the capacity of state agencies to provide the populace with meaningful strategies of survival, it is in the hands of large social organisations or businesses to provide those strategies. These businesses may also have a positive impact on the economy. A second mechanism that weak state rulers may employ is the incorporation of social organisations into state institutions or state-allied institutions, and the subsequent elimination of major power centres outside the mechanisms of state. The last method leaders apply to limit the influence of social organisations, which provide revenues for the state or components for the survival strategies of the population, is known as "accommodating capital". State leaders face increasing international pressure for economic efficiency. In order to achieve this, they have to create processes through which these new power centres could be accommodated in society without becoming threats to their own political tenure. These power centres also need to be convinced that the regime and its rulers would protect their interests. This is usually achieved through cooptation and the utilisation of discriminatory policies that favour these powerful social organisations to the detriment of smaller

fragmented organisations. Such policies include special privileges, appointments to state organisations, favourable tax and income transfer policies, tariffs and licensing (Migdal, 1988: 229, 235).

Hence – despite all the resources and agencies at the disposal of state leaders – some states still continue to be weak. According to Migdal (1988: 236) the nub of this problem is the dilemma of state leaders: their inability to effectively counter the fragmentation of social control, which forced them to adopt very distinct political policies. These policies impede the state's ability to develop strong and effective state institutions, which could mobilise the population and present new strategies of survival. Thus these destructive policies limit the process of state-making in Africa.

2.4 THE PROCESS OF STATE-MAKING IN AFRICA

Herbst (2000: 31) states the following with regard to state-making in Africa:

"For a truly comparative study of politics to develop, the great but incomplete drama of African state creation must be understood ... By examining both the environment that leaders had to confront and the institutions they created in light of their own political calculations, the entire trajectory of state creation in Africa can be recovered ... [P]olitical outcomes are the result of human agency interacting with powerful geographic and historical forces. And ... the viability of African states depends on leaders successfully meeting the challenges posed by their particular environment."

According to Ayoob (1996: 38) the process of state-making can be understood as the accumulation of central state power. It includes the extension and unification of territory and the establishment of order within this territory (by means of war), the maintenance of order (policing) and the obtaining of resources to maintain the war and policing activities as well as the various state mechanisms (taxation). However, these activities can only be successfully executed if the state complies with the Weberian prerequisite of monopolising legitimate organised violence in the territory and among the population it controls (Weber, 1947: 326). Thus the concentration of power in the hands of the agents of the state is of utmost importance for the state-making process. In states where the process is still in its elementary phases, state makers tend to use more coercive and forceful strategies in their attempt to accumulate power. This, in turn, leads to reciprocal violence from local strongmen who oppose the state makers' attempts to accumulate power and impose order (Ayoob, 1996: 39).

State-making in Africa never took place in this prescribed manner, as Africans had very little opportunity to try their hands at this endeavour. Instead, the traditional politics and social structures of native Africans were “replaced by a new abstract colonial state whose extensive rights were founded on an impersonal doctrine of sovereignty quite alien to most African cultures” (Cornwell, 1999: 62). This implies that the institutions of the colonial state, such as the legislature, bureaucracy, military, and monetary and judiciary systems were imposed on Africans without any consideration for their political and institutional development.

Furthermore, the nature of the state inherited by Africa’s independent rulers posed immense obstacles. The colonial powers transferred the foreign notion of statehood to Africa and coerced the continent into a pattern of territoriality and sovereignty. However, some essential aspects of state theory were not immediately transferred. In the first instance, the colonial states based their power on domination and on the capability to force their authority on the subordinate population in order to obtain the taxes needed for the maintenance of the colonial state apparatus – the typical features of state-building. However, the colonial powers did not intimate to their subordinates that there were limitations to the power of the state. This explains why much of independent Africa adapted authoritarian rule and why some of Africa’s new rulers decided that the limitations set on the absolute power of the state, which were only introduced during the immediate approach to independence, could be dispensed with (Cornwell, 1999: 63). Secondly, the colonial agenda made no provision for the transformation of the state into a nation, as it was not in the interests of the colonisers that the colonised peoples should be united into a single nation (Osaghae, 1999: 15). Thus the concept of nationhood, as complementary to the state, and the dangers of independent statehood, were introduced at a very late stage, and in some instances not at all (Cornwell, 1999: 63).

The fragmented distribution of social control, the delayed establishment of institutions of democratic politics and the exclusion of Africans from the political sphere until shortly before independence, meant that many countries became independent without grasping the intricacies of modern democratic politics and state-building. Notwithstanding this, the new independent African states were still expected to be full-scale social welfare states with advanced mechanisms, simultaneously engaging in complex drives for social and economic development in an environment of population explosion, increasing technological and economic gaps, superpower conflict and global tension. Faced by these challenges, it is no wonder that most post-colonial states lacked a clear consensus on how they should be governed. As a result, independence only entailed the substitution of the colonial rulers by local rulers, without any fundamental transformation in the character of the colonial state: the prevalence of authoritarian

and military regimes is a continuation of the military nature of the colonial state; political leaders' lack of accountability may be ascribed to the continued separation between state and society; and the structural dependence established by the colonial regime is to some extent to blame for the economic problems of the post-colonial state (Osaghae, 1999: 186).

After independence, a common strategy followed by the new rulers included the creation of a vague nationalism, which during the Cold War commonly found expression in national policies of economic self-sufficiency and internationally in the diplomacy of non-alignment. Theoretically, this had to go hand in hand with the mobilisation of the population in order to increase prosperity and improve the efficiency of the public administration. However, in practice, rulers were confronted with threats from their own subordinates, usually from the military forces.¹ Rulers immediately responded by undermining military command structures through the manipulation of factional disputes within armed forces. They also created various special units, informal paramilitary forces and palace guards. Although this rendered a higher level of short-term security for leaders, the long-term effect was the unrestricted distribution of arms and military knowledge in societies. According to Reno (2001: 3) "most African warlords originate in this context of fragmented military organisation, and come to the fore once the centralising power of the previous strongman leader collapses." Almost all the warlords in the DRC, Liberia and Somalia once occupied high positions in the governments they later attacked.

Indeed, the effects of colonialism did not end with the realisation of independence – it continued, though in more subtle ways, under neo-colonialism. During the Cold War, a large number of Africa's weak states were aided by patronage from the superpowers. This enabled them to restrain local strongmen with the use of superior weapons, bribe political opponents, and suppress domestic opposition under the cover of anti-imperialism or anti-communism – Mobutu Sese Seko's regime was a typical example of this process. However, the end of the Cold War, and the subsequent loss of aid, signalled the demise of these old forms of politics. Old external patrons either pressed for economic and political reform, or simply disappeared, as in the case of the Soviet Union. This undermined the ability of weak state rulers to maintain their regimes without resorting to war or reinventing new and innovative forms of patrimonialism. Meanwhile, the collapse of the Soviet Union, in addition to the Eastern bloc successor states' need to increase export earnings, transformed Soviet military aid into a private arms market, releasing cheap arms into the global market. This cheap weaponry gave strongmen the opportunity to arm themselves and to directly confront vulnerable leaders (Jackson, 2002: 44; Reno, 1998: 46).

¹ At the turn of the century, military rulers had replaced more than half of Africa's civilian governments and between 1970 and 1989, 53 out of 74 changes of government were accompanied by violence (Reno, 2001: 3).

In the twenty first century, the structural characteristics of weak states put decision and policymakers under extreme pressure, transforming weak state politics into a continuous process of crisis management. Rulers have to manage both internal and external demands to sustain some semblance of sovereignty, usually by way of "elite accommodation".² Internally, they need to constantly safeguard their authority and manage local strongmen. Externally, they have to manage or accommodate the demands of great power patrons, international financial institutions, multinational corporations, and inter-governmental organisations in order to ensure access to resources and to avoid sanctions (Jackson, 2002: 40-41).

Thus it is clear that state-making in its pure sense hardly ever received any attention in the pre- or post-colonial state. Consequently the state-making process currently evident in African states is comparable to the process found in Western Europe during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, where state building was initiated in the midst of a decentralised, mainly peasant social structures. During this process, a myriad of semi-autonomous authorities had to be eliminated or subordinated in the drive towards differentiated, centralised, autonomous institutions with effective control over territories. This endeavour caused immense suffering, resistance and loss of life and rights as large parts of the European population strongly resisted the state-making process. The process lasted for three to four hundred years, with the Western European states only emerging as responsive and representative modern states in the early twentieth century (Ayoob, 1996: 40).

The basic common characteristics of the process of state building explain why the state-making process in various contemporary African states strongly resembles several dimensions of the state-making process in Western Europe a few hundred years ago. However, this is where the similarities end. The difference in the speed at which state building has to be introduced and achieved as well as the radically changed international environment in which it has to proceed, explains why African state makers find themselves in an invidious position. In order to imitate the Western European process of state building, African state makers need adequate time as well as the freedom to persuade and coerce a diversity of recalcitrant groups within its populations to acknowledge the legitimacy of state boundaries and institutions, to allow the state to regulate certain aspects of their lives and to accept the extraction of resources by the state. However, state makers cannot rely on either of these two requirements since they are not adequately available for the leaders' utilisation (Ayoob, 1996: 41).

² This implies that, "to sustain a meaningful semblance of sovereignty, rulers need to cut informal deals with individuals who exercise power in their own right" (Reno, 1998: 2).

African state makers are not in a position to prolong the expensive and traumatic process of state-making over a protracted period of time, as was the case in Europe. The high level of competition between firmly established modern states within the state system and the efficacy of socially legitimate and administratively well-established and competent institutions impel weak state rulers to either accelerate the state building process, or to face international disdain and permanent marginalisation within the international system. Consequently state makers are compelled to converge several consecutive phases of the state-making process into one enormous state-building effort. More often than not, this effort becomes ungovernable as the pressure on the political system exceeds the political and military capabilities of the state, causing the escalation of crisis upon crisis. In addition, state makers' tasks are even further complicated by the demand for the humane treatment of the populations under their nominal rule and limited violation of human rights. This scenario goes a long way towards explaining the problems of legitimacy, authority and governance with which African state-makers are confronted (Ayoob, 1996: 41).

2.5 SUMMARY

From the preceding discussion it is clear that African states employing child soldiers do not exhibit the characteristics typically associated with sovereign, independent states. Instead, these states exhibit their own distinct set of characteristics: they experience serious problems of legitimacy; they suffer from a lack of cohesive national identity; local strongmen play an important role; state intervention is evident in almost every sector of the economy; informal markets exist parallel to formal markets; they are economically underdeveloped; they often utilise child soldiers; and they are vulnerable to external international forces and actors. In brief, these states are weak.

Migdal (1988) is of the opinion that the social structures influence at the most basic level the abilities and nature of these African states and the way in which social control is distributed within society. These social organisations and the social control they exercise are the consequence of two series of events: the expansion of the world economy historically radiating from Europe, and more latterly, colonialism.

The expansion of the world economy and the policies that accompanied it radically transformed the African population's social relations and rendered traditional strategies of social control obsolete. This meant that social control had to be restored, and in this conjunction the colonialists played a crucial role. As the colonial powers were foreign, exercising no internal social control, they had to establish social control through other means, without threatening their

own power bases. The easiest manner to achieve this was to offer resources to a number of indigenous strongmen, preventing any one strongman from centralising all power and inhibiting the creation of a bond of local solidarity. However, these privileges were only granted to strongmen who were of particular use to the colonial powers. This allowed certain strongmen to build social control in fragments of the society, to the detriment of others.

Consequently, since African states achieved their independence this fragmentation of social control has seriously undermined the creation and growth of state capabilities, as any attempt from state leaders to expand their capabilities threatens the various strongmen's autonomy, causing conflict. However, state leaders' tenure is dependent on the social stability the strongmen can ensure, as they are able to mobilise their people for specific purposes. The only way in which state leaders could secure long-term support from these fragmented societies is through strong state agencies, which have the ability to distribute material incentives and provide state services. This in turn creates a dilemma for state leaders. On the one hand, they need strong state agencies to mobilise fragmented societies. On the other hand it is necessary to mobilise the population so that these same strong state institutions would not threaten their political survival. Thus rulers have to decide whether they would continue major institution building and fend off potential threatening power centres, or whether they would relinquish major institution building, and sacrifice the objective of building efficient mobilisational capabilities. Leaders also face threats from power centres outside formal state institutions, which they either have to fend off or accommodate. This has led to the adoption of a very specific style of ruling, referred to as the "politics of survival".

However, the state leaders' dilemma does not only threaten the political survival of those same rulers, but also severely limits the already crippled state-making process, since it prevents agents of the state from accumulating central state power and imposing order. This has been further exacerbated by the nature of the state African rulers inherited at independence, the delayed establishment of institutions of democratic politics by colonialists, the exclusion of Africans from the political sphere until shortly before independence, and the payment of patronage by the superpowers during the Cold War. All these obstacles escalated and became a vicious cycle. Social fragmentation is persisting and politics have become a continuous process of crisis management with leaders trying to manage both internal and external threats to their political survival. As a result, the state-making process is still in its infant stage, putting state leaders under immense pressure to engage in an enormous state-building effort.

In conclusion, African states in which child soldiers are utilised are characterised by weak political systems and governments. Social fragmentation has created an environment that is

hostile towards state leaders' attempts to build strong state institutions and to mobilise the population. Accordingly, state leaders have adopted various strategies to manage this hostile situation and to ensure their political survival. These survival strategies have the potential to cause immense friction within societies, and can easily escalate into total war. These strategies, together with the socio-economic conditions inside weak states, provoke circumstances that increase the potential for conflict. This provides the focus of Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3

CONFLICT IN AFRICA

3.1 BACKGROUND

By and large, the political scenario in Africa is bleak. Over the last 40 years an astounding portion of the African continent has been at war. At no time has the sheer scale of war been as widespread and prevalent as is currently the case in Africa. Of the 30 serious conflicts in the contemporary world, about half could be found in Africa. During 2000, almost 66 percent of the 100 000 people killed worldwide by means of armed conflicts was in Sub-Saharan Africa and 75 percent of the countries in the region experienced some form of armed conflict (Southern Links, 2001). The Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan (United Nations, 1998), observes that the "consequences of these conflicts have seriously undermined Africa's efforts to ensure long-term stability, prosperity and peace for its peoples." These wars include both inter- and intra-state conflicts.

During the last three decades, Angola has been devastated by an intense civil war between the government and rebel forces (Shukman, 2000:1). In Burundi, civil war erupted in 1993, resulting in an estimated 200 000 deaths (Global Issues, 2001b). Rwanda continues to live with the consequences of the 1994 genocide that changed the demographic structure of the whole population and resulted in a shortage of adult males and a high number of orphans (Government of Rwanda, 2000: 7). In Sierra Leone, government forces, international peacekeepers and armed groups were in fierce conflict with each other from 1991 until 2002 when Sierra Leone eventually embarked on a process of peace-building (McIntyre and Thusi, 2003: 73). Civil war and factional fighting have besieged Somalia for the past decade, with no faction controlling more than a fraction of the territory (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b). Civil war has persisted virtually non-stop in the Sudan since 1983 and, while many parts of Uganda enjoy peace and development, a number of areas continue to be affected by armed conflict and other forms of insecurity (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2001). According to Jackson (2002: 30) these internal conflicts tend to be extremely severe and costly in terms of lives and refugees.

Inter-state conflicts are also prevalent. The conflict in the DRC has involved the forces of at least eight countries and numerous armed groups and has been characterised by appalling,

widespread, and systematic human rights violations, including mass killings and ethnic cleansing (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b).

3.2 CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN AFRICA

Although the current causes of African conflicts seem to be diverse in scope and intensity, they are, according to Migdal (1988), in essence caused by the fragmentation of social control and the subsequent dilemma of state leaders, as discussed in Chapter 2. Reno (1998:1) is of the opinion that weak state rulers have no intention creating a state that serves a collective good, or even creating institutions that may stimulate ideas of political and economic individualism and as a result threaten rulers' exercise of power. Instead, their main objectives are political survival and the maintenance of an integrated state. With a combination of tactful manipulation, weak states can maintain some degree of stability for long periods, despite internal disorder, corruption and poor economic performance. Nonetheless, they are constantly vulnerable to internal and external shocks, and are often compelled to adopt strategies to neutralise these shocks (Jackson, 2002: 40; Reno, 2001; Reno, 1998). These strategies, together with the socio-economic conditions inside weak states, create circumstances, which increase the likelihood and continuation of war. These strategies and socio-economic conditions are a convenient point of departure to explain the causes of conflicts in Africa.

3.2.1 Poverty

Poverty plays an extremely important role in the occurrence and continuation of conflict. Those countries that are torn apart by conflict average a Gross National Product (GNP) roughly one-third of that of non-warring states. Amoako (2000: 13) notes that endemic poverty and wide inequalities of income are reliable predictors of conflict. He states that "conflict is inextricably related to poverty, particularly the lack of human capital, which influences the probability of civil war." Poverty of this magnitude contributes to the emergence of war by exacerbating underlying tensions and depriving governments of the means of ending wars. In addition, poor people, and specifically children, are easy and cheap sources of recruitment, as they have little to lose from joining a rebellion. Poverty also contributes to the continuation of war, since it offers economic opportunities, for example the capture of valuable natural resources that are usually unavailable in times of peace (Tshitereke, 2003: 87). This set the stage for weak state rulers to employ their survival strategies.

3.2.2 Exclusive Politics, Political Centralisation and Authoritarianism

Exclusive politics, political centralisation, and authoritarianism are very often the root of internal conflicts. Strategies to enforce them are necessary since the state does not have the relative autonomy required to make reform viable, despotism unnecessary and true democracy possible. According to Jackson (2002: 42) these modes of governance disguise the incapacity of rulers to convert their power into functional political, economic and cultural policies. From the viewpoint of the ruling elite, political centralisation and exclusion has the advantage of depoliticising an already fragmented society. This is achieved by suppressing the effective political participation of the population, intimidating them with state power and concentrating all power within a small dominant part of the population. This was the case in Somalia where Siad Barre, the Head of State, favoured members of the ruling clan alliance – the Mareehan, Ogaden and Dulhante – and committed acts of violence against the Issaq and the Majerteen. He also mobilised various clans and factions in the Somali society and played them against each other in order to avoid the emergence of a strong unified anti-government coalition (Kivimäki, 2001: 20, 26).

Furthermore the ruling elite also initiates violence by means of militia recruitment, they often monopolise the extraction of scarce resources and grant exclusive export contracts. They even employ the state's defence forces as military-industrial enterprises, and procure external mercenary armed forces to support them in their fight against domestic rebels (Allen, 1999: 371).

Inequality and distributional grievances further exacerbate the problem. They entail inequality between groups and are encountered on three mutually reinforcing levels, namely economic, social and political. Many African governments find it problematic to enforce distributive justice. Because they are controlled by elitist groups in whose favour the distribution of public goods is biased, these states do not have the necessary autonomy or neutrality to function as effective agents of distributive justice, implying that government behaviour is particularly discriminatory against a certain group or groups in society (Amoako, 2000: 13).

It is important to note that these strategies frequently have deep historical roots. As stated in Chapter 2, colonial authorities governed the economy very strictly in order to restrict the flow of wealth to the population. Consequently this left the population with a "precarious material base" and the need to establish their authority. The absence of a population with a firmly established economic base and opportunities to engage in the private accumulation of wealth compelled them to take direct control of the state, converting politics into a material struggle. This struggle

for control of the state normally only reaches equilibrium when one opponent or contesting group emerges as the victor (Jackson, 2002: 42).

Jackson (2002: 43) is of the opinion that this class struggle and extreme competition provides the ideal circumstances for the development of "Caesarism, whereby a leader is entrusted with great power and arbitrates in an absolutist form of government." Such rulers preserve their power via the "illegal appropriation of state revenues and the establishment of corruption in a network of patrons and clients."

The situation in Liberia is a typical example of a war caused by the fragmentation of social control and the subsequent rise of political centralisation and authoritarianism. The country has experienced continuous political and economic difficulties since 1971, as well as intense power struggles between the ruling elite. Samuel Doe, President of Liberia at the onset of the conflict, came to power after a violent *coup d'état* by the army in April 1980. In order to safeguard his standing and ward off all opponents, Doe, a Krahn, bribed the Krahn and Mandingo communities by granting them employment and commercial opportunities. In 1985 he brutally suppressed a rebellion attempt by his main rival, Thomas Quinwonkpa, and "resorted to a particularly poisonous form of ethnic manipulation which was to have consequences in the ethnic pogroms of 1990" (Ellis, 1998: 157). To intensify the situation, at the outbreak of the conflict the Liberian economy was corroded, national debt was escalating, public institutions were flagrantly mismanaged and the government was autocratic and over-militarised. According to Dunn (1999: 96) the Liberian society was on the brink of total breakdown when the insurgency gave it its final shove.

Civil war began at the end of 1989 when Charles Taylor invaded Liberia from the Côte d'Ivoire border with 150 National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) fighters. Doe responded by slaughtering hundreds of people in Nimba County for presumably collaborating with the rebels. In response, thousands rallied to join the NPFL. Shortly thereafter, an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) monitoring group, ECOMOG, was sent to Liberia as a peacekeeping force, but failed to halt the fighting. The conflict degenerated into a brutal ethnic war as the NPFL battled ECOMOG, President Samuel Doe's Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and a splinter group known as the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia (INPFL). Not long afterwards, in September 1990, Doe was executed. Through the 1990s, various transitional governments ruled Liberia, as cease-fires were agreed upon and broken. Finally, in August 1996, ECOMOG was able to begin a disarmament programme to clear landmines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return. In 1997 presidential and legislative elections were held, in which Charles Taylor's party, the National Patriotic Party, won a clear majority of seats

in the National Assembly. However, this was not the beginning of a utopia for Liberia. Rebels began a new conflict in mid-2000 and in 2002 brought the fighting close to Monrovia (Jackson, 2002: 43; Peace Pledge Union Online, 2002; OnWar, 2000).

The start of the war in Liberia was also the start of the process of political decay. Since the inception of the war, it was clear that the rebels' strategy, and specifically the NPFL's, was to break down state and social structures, and to centralise all political power in the hands of Charles Taylor. In order to secure the military victory required to ensure Taylor's presidency, the NPFL established a strategy of systematically executing all state authority figures, including chiefs, government officials, doctors, teachers, nurses and administrators. Recollections abound about how NPFL members and other rebels – belonging to the multiplicity of armed factions that emerged in the brutal contest for loot and influence – beheaded rural state authority figures. The slaughterers believed that these killings would create job vacancies for them to fill. They believed that the more state officials they executed, the more rapidly the state would become theirs with all its presumed wealth and power. Not even the economic institutions were spared during this well-executed state disintegration. After assuring the German-owned company of Bong Mines – one of the main foreign exchange earning establishments, employing thousands of people – that the mine would be preserved, Taylor nevertheless went ahead and destroyed it. This lunacy of reckless destruction was repeated in Nimba, at the Swedish-American iron ore mining company, which also provided several health and education facilities to the population (Kamara, 2001).

After Taylor's election as President, Liberia has plunged further down the abyss of terror and thievery, eventually spurring a new conflict in mid-2000. For example, the custom of traditional chieftaincy, with its resilient law and order regimes has been discarded and replaced by the unquestioned authority of the rebel leaders, the new authority figures. The political subdivisions, known as counties, have all but totally disintegrated and are administered by feared former rebel commanders with no relations or ties in the areas under their authority. Cultural societies, such as the Poro and the Sande, traditional entities of authority, symbolising cohesion and security for many rural dwellers and peasants, have been totally corrupted and robbed of their significance. To ensure that these institutions fall within Taylor's framework of lawlessness and disorder, he commanded all cabinet ministers to become members of these societies irrespective whether the ministers had any interest or allegiance to them or not. Members refusing to obey such orders lose their jobs and are often charged for transgressions they did not commit. In most parts of the country outside Monrovia, the courts have deteriorated into virtual non-existence, and have been replaced by the custom of trial by ordeal, known as Sassywood, which primarily employs torture to coerce confessions from the accused.

The ancient tradition of accepting the authority, insight and wisdom of an elder's verdict has been replaced with the authority, insight and wisdom of armed and drugged rebels. Many of the new "state officials" are unpaid and live off the population – soldiers are abandoning the military to search for a daily living through other means, mainly by harassing civilians (Kamara, 2001).

As is evident from Liberia's example, the strategies of exclusive politics, political centralisation and authoritarianism are risky. When excluded or targeted groups attempt to protect themselves or take over the state, the struggle for domination or the utilisation of severe repression could well snowball into total armed conflict (Jackson, 2002: 43).

Another strategy, namely ethnic politics, is closely related to the strategy of exclusive politics.

3.2.3 Ethnic Politics

Adedeji (1999: 9) states the following with regard to ethnic politics:

"There is growing evidence to support the view that the elites in African societies, particularly members of the political class, have shown no restraint in manipulating the people through feeding them with prejudices against and stereotypes about other ethnic groups to win their support for achieving their own self-centred objectives ... Personal interests and ambitions of such leaders are framed in ethnic terms and the bells of ethnic solidarity are rung to rally group support even at the risk of developing animosity against another group which is considered the enemy. This sometimes degenerates into the incidence of people-to-people violence and pogroms."

As discussed in Chapter 2, colonial rulers created social fragmentation and intensified ethnic tensions by deliberately supporting some ethnic and religious groups at the expense of others. According to Jackson (2002: 42) "ethnic politics in Africa have their roots in the contradictions inherent in the exercise of state power by colonial authorities seeking to establish hegemony. Ethnic identity formation facilitated indirect rule, which in turn retarded emergent class consciousness." After independence, the new weak state rulers also utilised the strategy of ethnic appeal in an effort to establish domination. They made ethnic identity the basis for political participation and aimed to strengthen the competitive power of the ethnic groups to which the leaders of the ruling party belonged. Consequently the high premium placed on political power produced a zero-sum ethnic struggle for dominance. These divide-and-rule

policies produced permanent ethnically linked economic and political inequalities, which helped to fuel continuing cycles of rebellion and repression.

In addition the competition for political power exacerbates ethnic tensions as political leaders often attempt to mobilise supporters through appeals to ethnicity. Cultural repression is also a characteristic of conflict-prone areas, as ruling groups are often prejudiced against groups with different languages and cultures in the name of "national integration".

In addition, the globalisation of ethnic demands, which are facilitated by international organisations and human rights groups, can also place immense pressure on weak state rulers, since they often promote internal mobilisation which further weakens the efficiency of the state, and force rulers to adopt risky political strategies to manage their decreasing hegemony. The pitfalls of this strategy are that it could easily spiral into total war (Jackson, 2002: 42; Creative Associates International, 1996). This was the case in the DRC, Rwanda and the Sudan.

Although there are a number of complex reasons for conflict in the DRC, the original issues are ethnicity and land rights, involving the Banyamulenge, who are ethnic Tutsis, and who have been inhabitants of the Kivu region for ages. In common with most conflicts in Africa, the current situation dates back to the period of colonialism. The Banyamulenge were originally part of the Tutsi Kingdom in present-day Rwanda, but in 1885, King Leopold II of Belgium extended the Belgian Congo up to Lake Kivu in the east, dividing Tutsiland between the German colony of Rwanda and the Belgian territory of Kivu to the west of Rwanda. The Belgian colonial administration never recognised an indigenous native authority for the Banyamulenge Tutsis.

In 1981, Mobutu Sese Seko, the then Head of State of Zaire, used the historical fact that land rights could only be vested in native authorities, to deprive the Banyamulenge Tutsis of Kivu from their citizenship of Zaire, because they were of foreign origin. As a result, the Banyamulenge of Kivu were abandoned without land rights and citizenship. Subsequently, in 1993, thousands of ethnic Tutsis fled before the newly elected Hutu-based government in Rwanda, and settled in Kivu. In 1996, in response to this intrusion, Mobutu announced a plan to expel 300 000 Zaireans of Tutsi ethnicity from the country, including the Banyamulenge who are linked to the Tutsis, in an attempt to bolster local support and weaken the sources of opposition. The announcement was widely supported and Tutsis were attacked in the capital, Kinshasa. In response, Laurent Kabila's Tutsi-based Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Zaire-Congo (ADFL) revolted, which led to a vicious civil war that caused the overthrow of Mobutu Sese Seko's regime (Breytenbach, 1999: 8; Global Issues; 2001b).

Rwanda's feud between the Hutus and the Tutsis also has a long history, caused by ethnic hatred, as well as by disputes over land tenure and property ownership. In brief the Belgian colonial government opted to consolidate its power through Tutsi chiefs and hence appointed certain of these elements in prominent positions, allowing them privileged access to state resources and economic opportunities. The Belgians also instituted the carrying of identity cards, ensuring that identity would be based on ethnicity. Consequently, the minority group Tutsis ruled over the majority Hutus for many years, leading to hatred among some members of the Hutu population, particularly those in the north. During a bloody Hutu rebellion in 1959, many displaced Tutsis were forced to resettle elsewhere in Rwanda, while another 10 000 took the road to exile (Twum-Danso, 2003: 25).

In 1973 Juvenal Habyarimana became President of Rwanda after a palace coup by northern Hutus, particularly members of his Bushiru clan. Habyarimana and his supporters promptly consolidated their power at the expense of southern Hutus and specifically Tutsis. As a result, by 1980, 80 percent of the senior ranks in the army were occupied by Bushiru Hutus. During the 1980-1990s, President Habyarimana's government used population density and land shortages as an excuse to keep the Tutsi refugees from returning to Rwanda.³ As a result, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), consisting of mainly Tutsis, was established in neighbouring Uganda. In October 1990, the RPF attacked from Uganda, stating its intention to remove Habyarimana as Head of State, and to make possible the return of the hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees who had lived in exile for a generation. During 1993 Habyarimana and his supporters were confronted with the imminent loss of power, following a dramatic military advance by the RPF and a peace settlement favouring the rebels. In essence, this loss of power resulted in the last and most gruesome genocide of the century, in which at least half a million people perished at the hand of the Hutus – including as many as three-quarters of the Tutsi population (Creative Associates International, 1996).

Thus in retrospect one finds that the 1994 genocide was not the result of an uncontrollable outburst of rage by a people consumed by ancient tribal hatreds, but the result of a deliberate choice made by a modern elite to foster hatred and fear to keep itself in power. In the first instance, these few power holders set the majority against the minority to counter a growing political opposition within the state. For instance, they stockpiled weapons and passed them on to Hutu militias as part of the planning for the systematic butchery of the minority Tutsis

³ The 1993 Arusha Accords authorised refugees who return to their land within ten years to reoccupy their homes and land. However, this implicated that "old caseload" Tutsi refugees, initially displaced during the Hutu rebellion in 1959, had no rights to their own homesteads.

(Tshitereke, 2003: 85). Thereupon, confronted with the RPF's victories on the battlefield and at the negotiating table, this small elitist group transformed the strategy of ethnic division into genocide. They were convinced that the genocide would revive the solidarity of the Hutu under their leadership and help them to win the war. Thus they seized control of the state and used its machinery and authority to carry out their slaughter and their personal campaign. As Berry and Berry (1999: 3) put it:

"...the genocide in Rwanda ... was organised and implemented by a small group of extremist politicians using every means possible to hold power. Unaccountable before the law, this small group of individuals transformed racial extremism, oppression, and violence into legitimate means of exercising political authority."

The Sudan's protracted war is, in essence, also rooted in ethnic and religious hatred. The people of southern Sudan, who are primarily followers of the Christian faith, have been under siege from their own government in the north since the country gained independence from Britain in 1956. The current conflict began in 1983 and intensified after a 1989 coup by the National Islamic Front. Since then, the government in Khartoum has been systematically eliminating southern Sudanese people for political and religious reasons (Sailhan, 1999: 2; Toolis, 1998: 30).

Weak state rulers also manipulate democratic processes and mechanisms to manage the structural weaknesses of their states.

3.2.4 Manipulation of Democratic Processes and Mechanisms

In the post-Cold War era, a number of African rulers were forced to accommodate internal and external pressures for multi-party democracy, effective governance and higher levels of political participation, resulting in the adoption of multi-party democracy by means of competitive elections. It is significant that many rulers have not only managed the transition to multi-party democracy successfully, but also succeeded in retaining control of the state. However, this was usually achieved through the subtle, and sometimes open, manipulation of domestic rivalry and international perceptions. For example, many of the registered opposition parties in Angola are in fact a disguise for the ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) party. Essentially, this strategy intends to convince international financial institutions that governments adhere to political reform conditions (Jackson, 2002: 43).

However, in some instances democracy increases the possibility of war by reinforcing the power of "chauvinistic ethno-nationalist forces". For example, in the Sudan, democracy strengthened the hand of Muslim organisations that were hostile to the non-Muslim south, consequently causing an intensification of the civil war (Hirsch, 2001). Thus, as is the case with the other strategies, it is evident that the manipulation of democratic processes and mechanisms is a high-risk strategy, which could cause immense civil violence.

According to Reno (2001: 3-6) one of the most controversial strategies pursued by weak state rulers is patronage politics.

3.2.5 Patronage Politics

Because of the fragmentation of social control, many rulers face threats to their security and are making immense efforts to buy the loyalty, or at least compliance, of dominant groups in society. The simplest and most effective way of doing this is to employ state resources and assets as patronage. This practice, however, creates a blur between the collective and private interests of rulers. Reno (1998: 3) states the following:

"The triumph of informal ... networks to the near exclusion of state bureaucracies ... could leave rulers in a condition in which they pursue power through purely personal means and that pursuit becomes synonymous with and indistinguishable from their private interests. Rulers thus would jettison all pretenses of serving the interests of a public that may contain dangerous rivals or unruly citizens ... This absence of collective, versus private, interest is a major distinguishing feature of warlord politics."

Consequently, while the practice of patronage politics is effective at building power bases, it weakens the state's ability to render services to the wider population. Leaders who rule by means of patronage prefer not to spend money on education and health care, as a critical population would question the government's intentions. Furthermore, the allocation of scarce resources to public services may attract the attention of subordinates who may consider removing the corrupt leader and taking control of these resources themselves. In the event of the leader being removed from power, and the consequent disintegration of patronage networks, it is those with the most developed and advanced business contacts from the former government who are likely to have the best weapons, as those with financial resources and foreign business connections merely obtain arms faster than their opponents. Followers of these so-called warlords are usually young men who exploit warfare to enrich themselves, as

they are often the most marginalised segments in collapsing economies and corrupt states (Reno, 2001: 3-6; Baker, 1999).

Another form of patronage politics is racketeering, money laundering and organised crime. In Africa the opportunities for criminal behaviour are multiple, with only a few constraints in place. This arises as a result of the inadequate development of effective, efficient, fair and equitable criminal justice systems (Williams and Brooks, 1999: 86-87). Reno (2001: 3-4) observes that rulers often use control over the state to aid their business associates, grant loyal associates access to business opportunities such as smuggling or drug trafficking, and trade exemption from prosecution in exchange for favours. Foreigners wishing to conceal their illegal business transactions support such leaders, since both are able to use sovereign prerogatives to disguise their transactions. These arrangements transform patronage politics into trans-national alliances that generate profits in global markets. This was the case in Liberia, when President Taylor was accused of concealing illicit transactions of diamond and drugs smuggling from conflict zones in Angola and Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, many of these rulers' subordinates develop extensive networks in the criminal business world and these commercial connections are valuable resources for leaders of insurgencies who literally wish to fight their way into power (Duyvesteyn, 2000). Since the Cold War, well-armed subordinates in a number of African states have toppled political systems based on patronage. However, these new self-instated rulers do not exclude patronage clients in favour of building effective state institutions. Rather, Reno (2001:4) states the following:

"Nearly all the warlords in Somalia, Congo ... and Liberia once held high positions in governments they later attacked, and had developed important commercial connections as part of an old patronage network ... These connections have become valuable raw materials in battles to topple weakened patrons and to fight off other claimants of state power ... This phenomenon is not peculiarly African, but it is specific to the collapse of regimes that relied on clandestine commercial connections and predatory behaviour to survive."

One could thus deduce that African states may not necessarily be more corrupt than others in other parts of the world. The difference is that in Africa corruption is combined with a form of rule that is hostile to efficient state institutions and the rule of law. Such misrule often provokes substantial national criticism (Reno, 2001: 3). In order to combat unacceptable levels of corruption and mismanagement, reform coups may be initiated, which in turn often lead to internal conflict.

This was the case in Sierra Leone where a succession of corrupt governments methodically excluded the majority of the population from the political and economic arena. Since its independence from Britain in 1962, Sierra Leonean rulers have struggled to build a nation from a large number of diverse ethnic groups. Government had to buy the allegiance of various strongmen whose loyalty was essential for the effective exercise of power. Not wanting strongmen to utilise state institutions to threaten their own authority, rulers weakened government bureaucracies and manipulated access to resources in order to undermine possible rivals. For instance, Siaka Stevens, Head of State from 1967 to 1985, systematically turned over the country's diamond industry to dubious business associates whom he exempted from taxation (Reno, 1997b: 228). He also turned over the entire fishing and diamond industry to Jamil Sahid Mohammed, his Afro-Lebanese business associate. Mohammed attended cabinet meetings, vetoed ministerial appointments, opposed ministerial decisions and even violated government foreign exchange regulations. Another example of Stevens' corruption was in the realm of recruitment into the army and police, not based on merit but on connection. Such recruits were supposed to ensure regime survival and were conditioned to be violent, if the need arose, to support the regime (McIntyre, 2002).

Because of a lack of a strong independent base of personal followers, Joseph Momoh, Stevens' successor, was unable to end the private control of Sierra Leone's wealth that Stevens' cronies enjoyed. This loss of official revenue incapacitated most state institutions and rendered Momoh unable to supply essential state services. In response, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, was established, and called for the termination of government patronage and corruption. In March 1991 the RUF, backed by Liberia's Charles Taylor, launched its insurgency against the All Peoples Congress government of President Momoh (Abdullah and Muana, 1998: 178). In response to the invasion, Momoh increased the army's strength from 3 000 to 14 000 troops, but was unable to finance this expansion. As a result, soldiers did not receive their salaries and on 29 April 1992 they staged a coup, overthrowing Momoh, establishing 26-year-old Valentine Strasser as his predecessor. Within a comparatively short period the RUF deteriorated into one of the fiercest and most barbarous rebel armies in the world, whilst the war claimed over 75 000 lives and forced more than one million people to flee their homes (Jackson, 2002: 43; Reno, 1997b: 228).

Another strategy followed by weak state rulers is the manipulation of state economic structures and policies.

3.2.6 Manipulation of State Economic Structures and Policies

State ownership of enterprises, control of prices, and manipulation of exchange rates and foreign trade to the benefit of entrenched privileged groups are well known policies utilised by self-serving state officials. Weak state rulers who lack capable administrations find markets useful for controlling and disciplining their rivals. They also often contract a wide variety of economic roles to outsiders, partly to deny internal opponents access to resources and to utilise outsiders' expertise and connections to accumulate as much wealth as possible. This wealth is transformed into political resources, purchasing the loyalty of some and acquiring arms to coerce others (Reno, 1998: 1; Reno, 1997c: 497; Baker, 1999).

Weak state rulers also manipulate economic structural adjustment programmes, whose aim is actually to eliminate unproductive forms of economic behaviour and rent-seeking corruption and to curtail the effect of political interests in the economies of states (Cilliers and Cornwell, 1999). On the surface, the commercialisation of political power is consistent with structural adjustment programmes and other external reform requirements from creditors who dictate severe reductions in the size and activities of state agencies. However, behind the scenes, creditor demands to privatise state agencies and liberalise markets are used as pretexts to hire foreign firms, including those employing mercenaries. These services are very attractive to politically vulnerable leaders who need both capital investment to please creditors, and reliable fighters to battle rivals and control access to resources (Reno, 1997c: 497). This was the case in Angola, where the government hired Executive Outcomes (EO) to train personnel, recover the territory captured by UNITA and defend it against further attacks. As remuneration, the mercenaries were either paid in cash, or – as often happened – were granted mining concessions in mineral rich areas (Pech, 1999: 83; Kooson, 2000: 11; Clearly, 1999: 147). The Sierra Leonean government also brought in mercenaries, most notably British military consultants, Sandline International, as well as EO, in order to assist the government in its efforts to exploit and control the country's mineral rich resources (Douglas, 1999: 175; Cornwell, 1998: 2). The escalating incompetence of weak governments to prevent internal violence, induce private military companies to play an increasingly important role in African conflicts.

It is important to note is that this strategy – the manipulation of state economic structures and policies – directly negates liberal principles of private markets, since its intention is to prevent entrepreneurial activity among rivals. However, in order to maintain the pretence of legality, this market intervention usually occurs through the agency of individual partners or compliant foreign firms, rather than through formal state institutions. For example, formerly state-controlled enterprises often fall into the hands of clients and close associates of the ruler.

These ostensibly private enterprises also enjoy preferential access to credit, which obstructs the development of a truly autonomous private sector even further (Reno, 1997a: 169; Reno, 1998: 21).

Furthermore, Reno (1997a: 167) observes that rulers develop special relationships with aid agencies that acknowledge the political and economic alliances between weak state rulers and outsiders. Aid agencies prefer the stability accompanying these relationships to the anarchy prevalent in states besieged by warfare between local strongmen. Officials prefer to conduct business with rulers who claim internationally recognised state sovereignty, rather than attempting to build relations with competing strongmen. This relationship indicates how aid organisations and creditors, who are supposed to advocate the role of state authority in international affairs, eventually come to support political systems that increasingly deviate from conventional notions of state sovereignty. Ironically, this support enables weak state rulers to reject the risky strategy of authority-building by effective state institutions capable of mobilising populations, while controlling uniform central authority.

Yet, in order to employ the strategies of patronage politics and the manipulation of economic structures and policies, weak state rulers need one essential commodity – wealth-creating resources.

3.2.7 Exploitation of Resources and Creation of War Economies

Without resources and revenue rulers are unable to acquire the loyalty of their collaborators and purchase arms to coerce their enemies. However, against the background of the lack of effective state structures and institutions to build a healthy economy, rulers often find themselves caught up in dire economic crises and are forced to adapt to them. According to Jackson (2002: 45) this process of adaptation often involves assuming direct military control of resources and the creation of war economies. This removes the need for efficient state institutions, since the trading of scarce resources releases governments from the immediate pressure of collecting taxes from its citizens. Readily available exports income grants rulers the opportunity to exploit state funds to enrich themselves, their families and their cronies. Furthermore, in this context of scarce resources, corruption is integral to the political strategies of rulers, as revenues are used to build strong political networks and patronage to buy the co-operation of key individuals.

Yet, it is not only rulers who are interested in resources. Strongmen also require them in order to acquire arms to fight government forces and opposing strongmen. A specific type of

strongman, who is especially interested in the exploitation of resources, is a warlord. In this regard, Mackinlay (2000) states that the “combination of failing states, societies in transition, globalised markets, easy communications, improved transport technology and unprotected national resources has propagated new plunderers.” However, warlords should not be confused with insurgents who have a long-term political agenda and fight for the political control of a state. The opposite is true of warlords, since they are not interested in capturing the state as such. They surface only when the state has become too weak to interfere with their business transactions (Mackinlay, 2000). According to Allen (1999: 371) they are more interested in plundering than in military confrontation. They operate by exploiting and plundering the population by looting and taxation. More importantly, they exploit the natural resources under their control for their own personal enrichment, for patronage, and to purchase arms. They achieve this by establishing export trades with external business associates, including, amongst others, foreign firms and politically connected individuals in other states.

Consequently the motivation for conflict becomes less important than the question whether the warring parties are able to sustain their war effort financially. In other words, even if the initial rebellion was motivated by legitimate grievances, such a rebellion can only persist if it is financially viable (Naidoo, 2000). Thus in these wars groups compete for control over resources, which then become the “reward” for controlling the state. This move towards the formation of entrenched war economies is characteristic of a number of weak states with an abundance of natural resources such as land, oil and minerals.

The significance of diamonds in subsidising UNITA's war effort over the last decade is well documented. Profits from diamond sales became increasingly important, especially against the background of the political changes in the post-Cold War era. The diamond fields became the stage on which the players acted their war-play – a war that cost the lives of at least 500 000 Angolans, with thousands more maimed by landmines. Although diamonds have provided the majority of UNITA's funding, other resources, such as gold, coffee, wildlife products and timber were additional sources of funds. By seizing the areas of Lunda Sul and Lunda Norte Provinces near the DRC border, UNITA carved out a sizeable chunk of the diamond industry (Lewis, 1997). Consequently, between 1992 and 1998, UNITA obtained an estimated minimum revenue of US\$3.72 billion from diamond sales (Global Witness, 2000) and in 2001 between US\$1 million and US\$1.2 million worth of diamonds were smuggled out of Angola per day (Southern Africa Documentation and Cooperation Centre, 2001). This became the foremost barrier to the peace process. It has allowed UNITA to replenish its munitions and sustain a flow of supplies. This in turn has enabled it to ignore the 1992 election results and to evade meeting its responsibilities under the Lusaka Protocol.

Although diamonds play a crucial role in Angola's war, the importance of oil in the MPLA government's war strategy should not be overlooked. According to Reno (2000c: 219) oil is a crucial factor in the government's ability to procure access to political and economic networks outside the borders of the state. These networks do not only include markets, but also diplomatic and more politically associated commercial networks.

The battle for resources also prolonged the conflict in Sierra Leone where the government granted its loyal supporters the freedom to loot and the right to inflict violence on the population. This violence allowed government soldiers of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) to remain posted in resource-rich areas and to enrich themselves by virtue of the brutal exploitation of civilians (Abdullah and Muana, 1998: 182). In addition, the RUF embarked on the illegal mining and exporting of diamonds after capturing the diamond-rich areas of the Kailahun and Pujehun districts (Twum-Danso, 2003: 22).

The conflict in the DRC has also been influenced by the battle for resources. In fact, all sides have been accused of having commercial interests in the war. The extensive resources are being utilised to finance both warring coalitions, to aid the economies of the external actors in the conflict, and to produce private wealth for many cronies of the government and opposing groups. For example, the former President, Laurent Kabila, used money earned from mining to finance military recruitment, his diplomatic campaign and his political programmes. On the flip side of the coin, the rebels have also entered into business agreements to finance their participation in the war. Rebel-controlled territory is rich in minerals such as gold, diamonds and tin, as well as timber, coffee, tea, beans and maize which are sold through companies in either Uganda or Rwanda. Most of the money so obtained is stashed in Ugandan and Rwandan banks and used to purchase arms and medicine. Opposition groups also raise war taxes, for example on cameras, satellite phones and foreign-registered vehicles (International Crisis Group, 1999: 23).

A notable feature of the DRC's war is the role played by other states. The participation by Zimbabwe and Namibia indicates distinct undertones of business interests. Zimbabwe's political and military elite have transformed the conflict into a business goldmine for themselves. Philip Chiyangwa, head of a Zimbabwean government economic committee stated: "We Zimbabweans were the first ones to go to Kabila's assistance, so naturally we are hoping to go into Congo, using the fact that we are Zimbabweans as our trump card, and be big players" (International Crisis Group, 1999: 22). In an article written by Sigauke (1998), it is stated that the Zimbabwean government motivated local companies and individuals to take advantage of

these close relations in order to extent business relations. This is indeed the case. Kabila invited the Zimbabwean National Defence Force together with the Minerals and Mining Corporation and the Mining Development Corporation in Zimbabwe, known as Osleg, to join forces with DRC-based mining companies in extracting Kimberlite diamonds from the Mbuji-Mayi region of the DRC (Misser, 2000). In addition, he transferred all the activities of Gecamines, a major state mining company, to two private companies in which he, President Mugabe from Zimbabwe and President Nujoma from Namibia, had shares. These two companies formed an alliance to exploit the mineral resources of the central sector of the DRC (International Crisis Group, 1999: 22). Kabila also granted concessions to Angola to exploit offshore oil and to Namibia to operate the diamond mine at Tsikapa (Breytenbach, 2002: 7). This enabled Kabila to channel the profits into his own pockets as well as those of his allies.

In addition, Uganda and Rwanda have also regarded control over the exploitation of Kivu's large economic potential as a method of organising resources and business in the east of the DRC, which would decrease their dependence on international donors (International Crisis Group, 1999: 22).

Likewise, private companies (based in Kampala, Kisangani, Goma and Kigali), as well as local Congolese businessmen, are also cashing in on the war. The private companies deal in minerals, air cargo transport, weapons and essential commodities, while the expatriate businessmen use their duty-free status to import goods from the Far East without paying taxes. Most of them are supporting the rebellion and say they hope the war would continue (International Crisis Group, 2001: 23).

Considering the quantity of business flowing in and out of the DRC, it may be questioned whether or not the original ideological concept of the war is still valid. The rebellion, even if it may originally have had legitimate political claims, gradually became a pretext to plunder natural resources for the private enrichment of the participants.

In Sierra Leone, soldiers and rebels alike realised that immense profits were to be made through the illegal mining of diamonds and the looting of civilians. They not only invaded the alluvial diamond fields of the south, east and northeast, but also the areas of bauxite and rutile mining (Douglas, 1999: 178). The rebel group initially consisted of a group of 500 soldiers, but the seizure of the diamond mines quickly allowed them to increase this 500-man army to 20 000, armed with some of the best weapons on the market. They also raided towns and villages, leaving a trail of death, destruction and severed limbs (CNN, 2000). Similarly, soldiers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces (RSLMF), who were unhappy with the payment

of their wages and other benefits, started raiding and plundering, thus becoming very much part of Sierra Leone's problems.

In addition, the role played by Liberia's Charles Taylor is well documented. He used the RUF as a proxy to seize economically viable parts of Sierra Leone to purchase arms and pay off his own supporters. Liberia exports approximately 100 times more diamonds than its internal resources could ever hope to produce, and Taylor has consequently earned a fortune from his shares of the profits. Liberia had also been the main supplier of arms to Sierra Leone (Kamara, 2001).

Although the initial objective of Liberia's war was to obtain control over the central government, the exercise of control over the country's rich natural resources gradually became an objective in itself. Governments in neighbouring countries, as well as European governments and companies – specifically from France and Belgium – provided weapons to the different factions in exchange for gold, diamonds and timber (World Rainforest Movement, 2000). For example, in the early 1990s the factions sold rubber, timber, iron ore, gold and diamonds through a network of foreign firms. The income received from these exports peaked at US\$100 million annually. In addition, the factions received maritime registration income from international shipping to the amount of some US\$16 million to US\$20 million annually, split between the various factions (Reno, 1998). Currently, the export of timber is the Liberian government's key source of revenue. At the current rate of logging the majority of Liberia's forests will be non-existent within the next 10 years (Hofstatter, 2001).

According to Kaldor (1999) these wars are furthermore spurred by globalisation's destructive influence on states' political and economic designs.

3.2.8 Globalisation and International Mercantilism

Tshitereke (2003: 84) is of the opinion that these "conflicts reflect the re-emergence of globalised political economies that are no longer dependent on an inclusive nation-state competence." This causes the deterioration of central authority, notably over the instruments of legitimate organised violence. This, in turn, spurs the expansion of various sources of authority and power, for instance private military companies. This is accompanied by an increase in informal economic structures, which co-exist with the more formal structures of the economy, and together they pave the way for the collapse of economic and social security for the majority of the population (Kaldor, 1999).

The external intervention of large private companies in weak state wars clearly depicts the effect of globalisation and international mercantilism. The 1998 World Investment Report (1998: 185) states that foreign companies' main objective in the Third World is the extraction of resources. Belligerents also depend on the private sector's ability to exploit and commercialise scarce resources (British Ministry of International Development, 2001: 14). Staples (1999: 1) argues that one should realise that in the developing world, a corporation could function as an equal to national governments – it is able to apply its immense economic resources to support and even determine the outcome of civil wars, if political diplomacy fails to fulfil its narrow interests. In certain cases, a corporation can become a protagonist itself through economic warfare or by using highly trained and well-armed private armies. This was the case in the DRC where International Diamond Industries (IDI), an Israeli firm, was awarded an 18-month monopoly on diamond exports, presumably to provide funds and military assistance for the war effort (Dietrich, 2001).

Another case in point is the Sudan's civil war where the dynamic influence of the country's rich oil resources cannot be denied. A Christian Aid report (Christian Aid, 2001) states that companies from Britain, France, Germany, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Canada, Malaysia and China all have interests in oil exploration in the Sudan. In the midst of the bloodshed, oil corporations are collaborating with the Sudanese government to develop oil resources, providing money to buy arms and pay soldiers.

Canadian oil corporations and the Sudanese government started working hand in hand in 1997, when Calgary-based Arakis Energy Corporation began drilling for oil in southern Sudan. Initially, the government provided 1 000 soldiers to protect the drilling operation against rebel attacks, but since then, the number of wells has grown and so has the number of soldiers employed to protect them. Arakis assisted the soldiers by building a hospital, repairing military vehicles, and providing electricity and water to Sudanese army camps. Not surprisingly, rebel forces have attacked foreign oil corporations in their war against the government. In October 1998, Talisman Energy Inc bought Arakis. In February 1999, several churches submitted a proposal, requesting Talisman not to provide material aid to the Sudanese government to be utilised in the civil war, nor to infringe on internationally accepted standards of human rights. However, Talisman rejected the proposal. In August 1999, the start of the international trading of oil from the specially built Beshiar terminal near Port Sudan caused a new wave of anxiety regarding whether the protagonists were really interested in ending the prolonged conflict through negotiations. Bolstered by the enormous profits from oil exports, the government has no incentive for ending the war peacefully. Thus, the oil resources that were supposed to fuel the social and economic infrastructure of the continent's largest state instead fuelled the

ongoing civil war and famine, which has already claimed the lives of nearly two million people and has displaced 4.5 million more (Omondi, 2000: 24; Staples, 1999: 1).

The preceding discussion enables one to identify the various characteristics of conflicts within weak states.

3.3 CHARACTERISTICS AND CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICTS

Allen (1999: 369) makes the following observation with regard to Africa's wars:

"Looked at broadly, what is implied in the studies of war and violence in the nineties ... is that violence has become a norm within social and political behaviour, not an option and a last resort; that violence may now have become an end in itself, rather an instrumental device; and that violence and warfare have become self-producing, with no prospect that they can be brought to an end."

This remark suggests that these wars are different from those associated with the Clausewitzian school of thought. Kaldor (1999: 2) agrees with this notion and suggests that these conflicts are a concoction of war (generally defined as conflict between states or structured political organisations with political objectives), organised crime (violence used by privately established organisations for private objectives, mainly financial gain) and large-scale human rights violations (violence employed by governments or politically organised groups against individuals). Allen (1999: 369) observes that these conflicts usually transpire in the form of prolonged civil wars, which are resistant to peaceful settlement.

A very disturbing characteristic of these conflicts is the increased application of extreme, appalling and irrational forms of violence and brutality, which includes torture of women and children, mutilation, barbarous rituals and the forcible involvement of children, spouses and relatives in rape and killing. These forms of violence usually target civilians rather than armed militia and entire groups rather than individuals, as a means of humiliation, revenge and intimidation (Ero, 2000; United Nations Children's Fund, 1996c).

Another disturbing characteristic, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4, is the widespread use of child soldiers. Children have become one of the main targets of violence and are being used to perpetuate this. They are deliberately indoctrinated into a culture of violence and deployed as an instrument of war.

As mentioned previously, a significant socio-economic characteristic of African wars – which may be regarded as either a cause or a consequence of conflict – is the prevalence of widespread poverty and underdevelopment. To fully comprehend the extent of poverty in African warring states, and how they compare to the rest of world, it would be useful to examine their per capita income and HDI rankings⁴. Table 1, which summarises the per capita income of the various states from 1990 to 1999 and the HDI rankings from 1990 (when the HDI was first introduced) to 2001, clearly indicates that these states have at least two significant economic characteristics in common.

Table 1: Per Capita Income and Human Development Rankings during the 1990s (UNDP, 1992: 20; UNDP, 1995: 20; UNDP, 1997: 45; UNDP, 1999: 136-137; UNDP, 2001: 206-207; UNDP, 2003: 280-281; African Development Bank, 2000: 213; Esterhuysen, 2002: 44-45).

	Per Capita Income (US\$)				HDI Ranking					
	1990	1997	1998	1999	1990	1992	1994	1997	1999	2001
Angola	620	260	350	220	139	164	157	160	146	164
Burundi	210	140	140	120	142	165	169	170	160	171
DRC	230	110	110	110	127	143	142	141	142	167
Ethiopia	120	110	100	100	138	171	170	172	158	169
Liberia	471	-	-	-	131	159	-	-	-	-
Rwanda	310	210	230	250	134	156	174	164	152	158
Sierra Leone	240	160	140	130	159	173	175	174	162	175
Somalia	150	-	-	-	151	166	-	-	-	-
Sudan	390	290	290	330	145	144	158	142	138	138
Uganda	220	330	310	320	133	158	159	158	141	147

From the above it could firstly be deduced that they are very poor states with declining per capita income. In 1990, the average per capita income of these states was US\$296, which was well below the US\$409 average of Sub-Saharan Africa. In 1999, the situation had deteriorated even further, with the per capita income averaging only US\$198 – once again very low in

⁴ The HDI is a composite index used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to measure progress in basic human development by incorporating achievements regarding the most basic human capabilities, namely longevity, knowledge and standard of living. Three variables have been chosen to represent those dimensions: life expectancy at birth, educational attainment (i.e. adult literacy rate and combined enrolment ratio) and real income (i.e. purchasing power). Depending on their HDI values, states are ranked into three groups: high human development, medium human development and low human development (Esterhuysen, 2002: 24).

comparison to Sub-Saharan Africa's average of US\$500. It is evident that during this period the average per capita income was never even close to the cut-off line of one dollar per day.

Secondly, they are all low-ranking in terms of HDI. In fact, all these states, with the exception of the Sudan (which was ranked medium in 2001) are ranked as low HDI states. Since 1994, Sierra Leone has had the lowest ranking in the world. All ten the above states were ranked in the lowest 20 percent of the total number of states over this time period. Although levels of development were already unfavourable at the beginning of the 1990s, it reached desperate proportions in 1999 when these states were among the lowest 15 percent of ranked states. This means that, in general, the per capita income, life expectancy, adult literacy rates and school enrolment ratios of these states are very low. This translates into very low levels of development.

Another characteristic, which emanates from poverty, is the uneven access to wealth-creating resources. According to Breytenbach (2002: 5) this causes polarisation, which creates a struggle for power and wealth between rulers and rebels. Because the formal economies of poor states offer restricted money-making prospects, the focus shifts away from the formal and legal sectors of the economy to the informal and illegal sectors, where opportunities for wealth-making are much better. This may explain why the majority of African wars are intra-state, rather than inter-state, and why the battle for resources has become a characteristic of numerous poor states.

This also clarifies the creation of war economies, as the chaos and confusion created by conflict lead to the emergence of a parallel economy that often serves to fuel the war. Tshitereke (2003: 89) agrees with this notion, stating that "whereas in the Clausewitzian dissection, war was seen as the continuation of politics by other means, the contemporary discourse reverses the equation and war is increasingly becoming the continuation of economics by other means." Naidoo (2000) confirms this point of view, observing that "current trends and modalities of protracted conflict reflect transnational economic linkages which are heavily reliant on the smuggling of a state's natural resources for the supply of military hardware required for sustaining a war." These war economies are administered by various role players. Breytenbach (2002: 3) depicts them as a triangle of interdependent forces with three types of actors, namely rulers of weak states, rebels and mercantilists who profit from the proceeds of scarce resources.

This introduces another characteristic, namely the increasing prominence of non-state actors. The parties waging these wars are diverse and include groups such as paramilitary units, local

warlords, criminal gangs, police forces and also mercenary groups (Kaldor, 1999: 8). The most prominent of these actors are warlords who operate by exploiting and plundering the resources and population under their control.

The consequences of these conflicts are multiple and far-reaching. The scale and nature of warfare have directly affected the lives of many millions of Africans. It exacerbates the problems associated with poverty. It leads to the collapse of instruments of public order, for instance the military and police. It destroys the physical public infrastructure, including schools and hospitals. This leads to diminished access to public services, and hence higher disease and infant mortality rates and lower school enrolments. It undermines existing safety nets and coping mechanisms within local communities. It diminishes the population's sense of citizenship based on shared rights and obligations. It creates competition for resources between previously cooperating regions, ethnic groups and communities. It creates increasing numbers of vulnerable people, such as refugees and displaced people, orphans, female and child headed households, HIV/AIDS victims etc. It leads to the emergence of new groups that are dependent on war for their livelihoods, but who are also potentially at risk, for instance child soldiers, demobilised combatants and war wounded. It produces new forms of inequality associated with the privatisation of violence. It leads to rent-seeking by those with access to state and military power, and those controlling weapons, transport routes, food distribution, access to aid, minerals and natural resources.

3.4 SUMMARY

Africa's inter- and intra-states conflicts severely impair all attempts to establish sustainable stability, prosperity and peace for the continent's people. Poverty is a significant factor in the occurrence and continuation of these conflicts. They may furthermore be regarded as an unintentional consequence of weak state rulers' strategies to maintain power, to establish domination, and to govern political demands. Political centralisation, authoritarianism and repression, the exclusion of certain ethnic groups from the economic and political spheres, the manipulation of democratic processes and mechanisms, patronage politics, the manipulation of state economic structures and policies, the exploitation of resources, and the creation of war economies are all high-risk strategies, which could lead directly to war. In these cases, the structural features of weak states (fragmented societies, the dilemma in which state leaders find themselves, etc.) are the underlying causes of internal conflicts, while the strategies of rulers are the immediate cause or the trigger of such conflicts (Jackson, 2002: 45; Amoako, 2000: 13).

However, many of Africa's internal conflicts are the direct result of deliberate strategies designed to accumulate wealth as weak state rulers and their antagonists recognise the advantages of war economies. Globalisation have created increasing external demands and decreasing internal resources in many weak states, and also widened the gap between the developed and developing regions of the world, intensifying the economic problems of many weak states. Declining financial resources for both patronage and coercion often force leaders and their rivals to seize direct military control of resources and populations. These conflicts also reflect transnational economic linkages, which strongly depend on the exporting and smuggling of scarce resources for the provision of funds and military hardware required for sustaining the war. These entrenched war economies are not only administered by political elites who employ national armies to foster business enterprises for personal financial gain, but also by rebel movements who seize control of strategic locations with guaranteed economic spin-offs and by mercantilists who capitalise equally on rulers' and rebels efforts. This leads to an increase in poverty and underdevelopment, as scarce resources and income are channelled away from the populace into the hands of the various internal and external role players. This causes conflicts to escalate, as large sectors of the poor population, including children, start to participate in war as a means of laying their hands on a share of the financial benefits flowing from war economies.

These conflicts have serious effects on the communities in which they occur. Besides the immense loss of lives, people also lose their livelihood: houses, businesses, hospitals and schools are destroyed; economic conditions deteriorate; illness and disease spread like wild fires; children do not obtain any proper education; and millions of people are displaced or become refugees. These circumstances seriously affect children, as they create the ideal conditions in which child soldiers are recruited and exploited. Chapter 4 will focus on the child soldier phenomenon and the underlying socio-economic conditions that contribute to the participation of children in armed conflict.

CHAPTER 4

CHILD SOLDIERING IN AFRICA

4.1 BACKGROUND

Africa's wars – whether caused by fragmented societies, warlords and weak state rulers, or arising from social, political and economic conditions – have an extremely negative impact on the continent. Amoako (2000) states the following:

"War is undoubtedly the destroyer of economic development on our continent. Indeed, the empirical evidence is now overwhelming that armed conflict destroys capital, leaving shattered infrastructure in its wake; armed conflict, being a negative shock on economic systems, reduces savings even when the levels of these savings are most fragile; armed conflict diverts portfolios away from domestic investment, and triggers massive capital flight; armed conflict also distorts foreign aid budgets which now increasingly are devoted to emergencies; and, most fundamentally, armed conflict massively diverts government expenditures away from provision of economic services towards military expenditure."

Although war obviously impacts on all African communities, it is the children who suffer most during conflict situations. Children and youths are left orphaned, displaced, or become responsible as the head of the household when parents are killed or away fighting. Schools are destroyed or closed, fields are off-limits because of combat or mines, and relatives and neighbours are arbitrarily arrested, abused, tortured or killed. Such youths are at risk for recruitment or, in their desperation, become receptive to ideological propaganda encouraging them to enlist, as a gun is often a meal ticket and a more attractive option than sitting at home, being afraid and helpless (Smit, 2001).

UN Secretary General Koffi Annan noted in his report, "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa" (United Nations, 1998), that war affects virtually all of the social and economic issues affecting children. Scarce development resources are diverted to war. Essential health and education services are paralysed. Entire communities are uprooted and impoverished by the loss of livelihoods, rendering specifically women and children vulnerable to disease, hunger and sexual exploitation.

It should, however, be borne in mind that the involvement of children in conflict is not a recent phenomenon. Stravrou *et al* (2000: 35) and Brett and McCallin (1996), amongst others, mention that children have actively served their nations or communities as soldiers in armed conflict since the beginning of time. In the ancient civilisation of the Spartans, boys were taken from their homes for military training at the age of seven (Stravrou *et al*, 2000: 35); in Europe in the Middle Ages, teenage boys were knight's attendants, caring for their armour and performing other supportive tasks (Brett and McCallin, 1996; United Nations Children's Fund, 1996d); the children's crusade of 1212 featured 30 000 children of which many were sold into slavery and many more drowned in the Mediterranean; in the early nineteenth century boys as young as 12 years were soldiers in Napoleon's army; Nelson's navy included many teenage naval cadets and midshipmen (Honwana, 1999: 4); the twentieth century saw children drafted as soldiers in both World War I and World War II (Brett and McCallin, 1996); and, more recently, the British army used youths of 17 on active service in the Gulf war (Honwana, 1999: 4).

However, more recently, as stated in Chapter 1, technological developments and the proliferation of weapons, especially small arms, have made semi-automatic rifles light enough to be used and simple enough to be stripped and reassembled by a child of ten. Moreover, these weapons are not expensive – in some countries at war, an AK47 may be bought for as little as US\$6 (Machel, 1996; Akwei *et al*, 1999). These developments enable the deployment of child soldiers on a much larger scale and in more dangerous circumstances than ever before.

4.2 CHILDREN INVOLVED IN ARMED CONFLICTS

Children do not have the intellectual or physical maturity to be reliable fighters. If this statement is true, why then, are they recruited as soldiers? Experts are of the opinion that there are two fundamental reasons for employing under-aged recruits. Firstly, children are easier to recruit and retain than adults. They can easily be intimidated and exploited, do as they are told, are less likely to rebel or escape, and do not demand wages. They are also small, speedy, fearless (specially under the influence of drugs and alcohol) and are able to move around unhindered without instantly being suspected of spying or supplying. A second reason refers to a shortage of manpower (Bennett, 1998: 31; Brett, 2000). According to Brett (2000), child recruitment is rare in the early stages of any conflict, but once the pool of recruits dwindles because of war, poverty and disease, children provide a convenient last reserve of fresh recruits to fill the ranks. Since irregular and guerrilla forces cannot conscript members of the general population, they are the first to resort to the forced recruitment and press-ganging of children. However, Table 1, which summarises the employment of child soldiers by government forces, paramilitaries and

rebel groups, clearly indicates that all the armed groups in these wars are to a greater or lesser extent guilty of recruiting and deploying children. Recruits are arbitrarily seized from the streets, schools and orphanages. Typically, these children feel abandoned, fearful and horrified. This is the start of a tyranny of fear and indoctrination intended to undermine the children psychologically and to make them subservient to their commanders. Efforts to resist are met with physical abuse, death or severe reprisals against the children's family members. Children from the poorer areas in the community are particularly vulnerable.

Table 2: The Utilisation of Child Soldiers by Government Forces, Paramilitaries and Armed Opposition Groups (Masland, 2002: 34; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001a)

	Government Armed Forces	Paramilitaries	Armed Opposition Groups
Angola	✓		✓
Burundi	✓		✓
DRC	✓		✓
Ethiopia	✓		
Liberia	✓	✓	✓
Rwanda	✓		✓
Sierra Leone	✓	✓	✓
Somalia		✓	✓
Sudan	✓	✓	✓
Uganda	✓		✓

4.2.1 Recruitment by Non-Governmental Forces

There are numerous examples of forced recruitment by rebel forces on the continent. Angola's opposition force, UNITA, is notorious for forcibly recruiting and abducting children as young as 10 years old as combatants and sex slaves. Recruits are usually sent to remote military camps for training. Few constraints exist on what the trainers inside these camps can do to children, and children themselves lack the internal locus of control, which normally develop through exposure to positive role models and a healthy family life, to distinguish right from wrong. Once recruited, they are subjected to varying degrees of indoctrination through processes that use fear, brutality, and psychological manipulation to achieve high levels of obedience, converting these children into killers. They are desensitised to violence by being exposed to it. They are

also often subjected to beatings, humiliation, and acts of sadism. (Africa-Europe Faith and Justice Network, 2000).

Likewise, in the DRC the MLC and the RCD-ML regularly undertake recruitment missions into villages, returning with truckloads of children between 13 and 18 years, who receive infantry and weapons training from UPDF instructors. The RCD-Goma, assisted by Rwanda's RPA, also undertake massive recruitment campaigns targeting Congolese as well as Rwandan children and youths. Children are frequently sent into battle without weapons to create a diversion, resulting in immense casualties (Marshall, 2001, 2001b; Anon, 2002a).

Another example are the Hutu opposition forces in Burundi – the National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), the Party for the Liberation of the Hutu People-Front for National Liberation (PALIPEHUTU-FNL) and the Umbumwe-Front for National Liberation (FROLINA) – which are all well-known for recruiting and abducting children from schools and other public sites within communities. At the start of the conflict, between 3 000 and 5 000 children under the age of 18 were sent to the Central African Republic, Rwanda and Tanzania for training. The main recruiting targets are street children, orphans, children separated from their families and children from very poor families (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 21).

In Rwanda, President Habyarimana provided training to the youths of his party and established the militia known as the Interahamwe. Many poor young men responded to the President's call to participate, based on the promise of rewards. Of the approximately 60 percent of Rwandans under the age of 20, the majority had no hope of obtaining the property or jobs necessary to support a family. These young men, together with thousands displaced by the war and living in camps near the capital, provided many of the first recruits to the Interahamwe (Human Rights Watch, 1999a).

Similarly, the LRA has abducted nearly 10 000 Acholi Ugandan children to serve as soldiers, porters and sex slaves since 1987. In November 2001, records indicated that there was no indication of the safety or otherwise of 5 555 children who were still unaccounted for (Machel, 1996: 16; Anon, 2002b). According to Amnesty International (1997) commanders belonging to the LRA, force children to participate in ritualised killings soon after they are recruited. The objective is to break down resistance, destroy taboos about killing and implicate children in criminal acts. Children are also forced to commit atrocities in their own villages, thus preventing them from ever returning to their homes and families (Wessels, 1997: 34). This is a frequently used tactic, exposing them progressively to violence, numbing them so that these children could

someday commit acts of sadism of their own accord, without being instructed to do so. Psychologically weakened and fearful of their commanders, children can become obedient killers, willing to take on the most dangerous and horrifying assignments (Fair, 1995).

Ethiopia's armed opposition, the OLF, has forcefully abducted and recruited children already prior to 1995. It happens from time to time that children join these forces voluntarily as they see it as the only organisation in Ethiopia that fights for the rights of the Oromo people. The existence of a battalion of about 100 women and girls has also been reported (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001b; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 37).

All the factions involved in Somalia's civil strife are also guilty of child recruitment. Although exact figures of child recruitment and employment are difficult to verify, it is widely believed that children as young as 10 years have participated in militia attacks. Many young people are members of the gangs, known as *morian*, who loot and plunder wherever they go (Child Soldiers Global Report, 2001; Child Soldiers 1379 Report, 2002: 85).

During Sierra Leone's civil war the RUF often rounded up thousands of young people from the border zone with Liberia and forced them to take part in horrific acts of violence against members of their own families and communities (Richards, 1999: 18; Center for Defense Information, 1998a; Loyd, 2001). According to Boothby and Knudsen (2000), an estimated 80 percent of all rebel soldiers were between seven and 14 years of age. Children were also often forced to take drugs and alcohol. Under the influence of these substances they were inclined to commit atrocities that they would not commit under normal circumstances (Fofana, 1999). Former RUF child combatants have admitted that they were forced to drink alcohol and take drugs, including cocaine, amphetamines (referred to as blue boats), and marijuana. When children refused to take drugs, they were often beaten, and in some cases even killed (Amnesty International, 2000c). Komba, a boy captured by the RUF, recounts the following: "My legs were cut with blades and cocaine was rubbed into the wounds. Afterwards I felt like a big person. I saw the other people like chickens and rats. I wanted to kill them." 14-year-old Alieu tells: "We smoked jambaa [marijuana] all the time. They told us it would ward off disease in the bush. Before a battle, they would make a shallow cut here [on the temple, beside his right eye] and put powder in, and cover it with a plaster. Afterward I did not see anything having any value. I didn't see any human being having any value" (Masland, 2002: 33).

In Liberia, the opposition group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) also recruit children, often in return for food from their families (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001). According to McIntyre and Thusi (2003: 79) there are unconfirmed allegations

that some former child soldiers from Sierra Leone are fighting alongside the LURD rebels in Liberia.

Although rebel groups are the main culprits in exploiting children, government forces are not without guilt.

4.2.2 Recruitment by Government Forces

Whenever governments on the continent are desperate to replenish their fighting forces, they too yield to the above temptation (Bennett, 1998: 31). When investigating the legal age of recruitment in the African states where child soldiering is most severe, one finds the following: the minimum age for recruitment laid down by a government is 16 years (Burundi); in Angola and the Sudan the legal age is 17 years and in Sierra Leone it is 17,5; Ethiopia, Liberia, Rwanda and Uganda all state that no children under 18 years may be recruited; and the DRC and Somalia have no legal limitations on child recruitment (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001). In reality, these legal limitations are transgressed at will and government forces often forcefully conscript under-aged children. For example, when administrative systems are inadequate and conscription is not done systematically on the basis of a register, lawful conscription could easily degenerate into lawless press-ganging. Machel (1996: 16) reports that birth registration and identity records are inadequate or non-existent in many countries and children do not know their own age. This means that recruiters have to guess their ages based on physical appearance and development and often illegally enter the age of recruits as 18 in order to give the impression that they are complying with national laws.

Once again, examples abound to confirm the recruitment of children by government forces. In Angola, the recruitment of children by government forces has occurred throughout the country, particularly targeting poor communities, unemployed young men and internally displaced persons. According to a report by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers (2002: 17) to the UN Security Council, military commanders pay off police officers to supply new recruits. In 2001, an estimated 3 000 children were among the ranks of the FAA. Angolan government forces also allegedly recruit Angolan refugees in Namibia as well as large numbers of Namibian youths, some as young as 14 years of age.

Likewise, in 1996-97 in neighbouring DRC, the ADFL, under the leadership of Laurent Kabila, recruited and deployed more than 10 000 children in its rebellion against former President Mobutu (Gumende, 1999). After 1997, some of the children who were recruited prior to the regime change continued to serve in the government FAC. Towards the end of 1998, the

government urged young people between the ages of 12 and 20 to enrol in the armed forces in response to an anti-government insurgency, resulting in 6 000 young people being sent for military training. In 2001 children as young as 10 years of age were allowed to enlist, despite President Kabila's decree to reduce the government's use of child soldiers (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 30).

In Burundi, the tendency repeats itself in that government forces have recruited a substantial number of children under 18 years of age since the beginning of the civil war. Despite the government's stated policy of over-18 recruitment, a lack of birth registration and trafficking of identity documents makes the recruitment of minors difficult to control. Government forces use hundreds of *doriay* (ear agents), some as young as 12 years, to collect and provide information, to participate in looting, to serve as watchmen, scouts and porters, and to perform domestic tasks in exchange for food. The government also recruits children for local defence forces, known as *gardiens de la paix* (guardians of the peace) (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 20).

In 1994 the Rwandan Ministry of Defence agreed to demobilise all child soldiers. At that stage the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) hosted an estimated 5 000 children under 18 years. Although the Rwandan government recently claimed that government forces no longer employ child soldiers, sources indicate that the RPA still recruit children on a regular basis. These children include both Rwandans and Congolese who are trained by the Rwandan armed forces and sent to the DRC as reinforcements. The Rwandan government dismisses these claims (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001).

Although Uganda's legal recruitment age is 18, the government admits that during the war in the 1980s, the Museveni-led National Resistance Army deployed large numbers of child soldiers. However, the government claims that the utilisation of these children was dictated by circumstances and that the children were never engaged in serious battles. Lately, the UPDF has recruited under-18s in northern Uganda to fight the LRA in Southern Sudan. The UPDF has also provided military support to opposition groups in north-eastern DRC by training and equipping young recruits (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 96).

Between 1993 and 1996 the Sudanese government resolved to institute forced recruitment, as too few men were recruited during regular conscription. These recruits included children as young as 12 years of age. In addition, paramilitaries and armed groups siding with the Sudanese government also have a history of forced recruitment and abduction of children as young as 10 years. These groups include the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) and the Baggara

tribes of the Western Sudan who are armed by the Sudanese government. In March 2002 it was reported that government and allied paramilitary forces continued their previous practice to abduct women and children during attacks on villages in southern Sudan (Amnesty International, 2000d; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 93).

In Ethiopia, thousands of children were recruited into the government forces during the border conflict with Eritrea (Amnesty International, 200b). Recruitment focused mainly on children from the Oromos and Somali ethnic groups, as these groups traditionally form the main opposition to the government. Peasant and urban-dwellers associations were given recruitment quotas and mainly targeted unemployed youths and street children. Children were also press-ganged from villages, schools and marketplaces. They would, for example, surround a marketplace, order every male to sit down and then force anyone deemed recruitable into a truck. Teenagers who worked in the streets selling cigarettes and sweets were particularly at risk (Wessels, 1997: 34). Since there is no proper system of birth registration in Ethiopia, it is difficult to verify the age of children, leaving minors at a high risk of recruitment (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 36).

During Sierra Leone's civil war the government-allied forces consisted of a loose coalition between the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civil Defence Forces (CDF). The government came to rely heavily on the CDF, which included various groups of traditional hunters, in particular the *kamajors*, who were well known for recruiting children, including some previously demobilised child combatants. For instance, in 2000, 25 to 30 percent of the SLA/CDF forces in the town of Masiaka consisted of children between seven and 14 years of age. Recruitment also took place in the Bo, Kemema and Moyamba Districts of the Southern Province (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001; Farley, 2001).

During the course of Liberia's seven-year civil war child soldiers were recruited by the AFL and pro-government militia groups that consisted mainly of former NPFL combatants, many of whom were also recruited as children. Boys were sent to the Small Boy Units where they were conditioned to rape, torture and kill. They were also given drugs, notably marijuana, amphetamines and a cocktail of gunpowder and cane juice. However, the end of the war did not bring relief to the children. The continued instability in the country meant that Liberian security forces continued with the forced conscription of children as young as 14 years (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2002: 58).

4.2.3 Voluntary Participation

A large number of young soldiers are not forced or coerced into participating in conflict, but present themselves for service. However, it would be misleading to consider this as voluntary, as voluntary participation is often a response to pressure of a more subtle nature (Shiraz, 2001).

Children sometimes feel compelled to take up arms for their own protection. Alone, orphaned and frightened, they may often finally choose to fight. Some children believe that they are safer inside armed movements than outside, and that being attached to a military force is the best chance of surviving a situation of violence and social chaos. Boothby and Knudsen (2000: 60) quote a boy from the DRC saying: "I joined Kabila's army when I was 13 because my home had been looted and my parents were gone. As I was then on my own, I decided to become a soldier."

There are also children who have grown up with violence – since many current disputes have lasted a generation or more – and see this as a permanent way of life. In Uganda in the late 1990s, some abducted girls who became pregnant were taken to special camps in the Sudan and cared for by older LRA female commanders until they gave birth. The children then became the next generation of LRA fighters (Mazurana and McKay, 2001: 3). Being exposed to nothing other than war and fighting, it is almost impossible for these children to assume any other role than that of a soldier.

According to Bennett (1998: 32), the sheer fun and adventure of wearing military gear and carrying an AK47 around attracts a significant number of children. This should be understood against the child's personal circumstances as refugee, street child or orphan. In these circumstances fighting is certainly the preferable option. Similarly, children may also be lured by the power they have when they carry arms.

Children also have active reasons for fighting. They may see themselves fighting for social justice, religious beliefs, nationalistic and political ideology, or cultural identity. Wessels (1997: 32) reports that in the 1990s in Rwanda, the Hutu-dominated government transmitted messages of hate towards the Tutsis, thus preparing children for their roles as killers in the youth militias in the 1994 genocide. However, Cohn and Goodwin-Gill (1994: 35) are of the opinion that young children do not have sufficient cognitive capacity to think rationally regarding concepts, such as ideology and nationality, and suggest that these children are indoctrinated into fighting for these causes. Machel (1996: 17) states that children are particularly impressionable in early adolescence when their personal identities are being developed.

Children may also have more personal reasons for taking up arms. Many child soldiers have personally experienced or witnessed rape, torture, massacres, disappearances, summary executions, death squad killings, arbitrary arrest and detention, bombings, forced displacement and destruction of home and property (Sesay *et al*, 2000: 48; Machel, 1996: 16). These experiences often create a desire for revenge or the resolve to continue the struggles of lost loved ones. In Uganda in 1985 the National Resistance Army child soldiers were described as "highly motivated, reliable and dedicated, often instilled with a strong sense of revenge triggered by the UNLA [Uganda National Liberation Army] atrocities against their families, friends or village" (Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, 1994: 32).

4.2.4 Children as Soldiers

Children perform a variety of tasks, including a whole range of military activities, increasing their exposure to hardship and violence. The younger ones usually start as porters, carrying food and ammunition. Although this may seem completely innocent, it entails carrying very heavy loads of up to 60 kilograms, including carrying injured soldiers. Children who are too weak to carry their loads are often savagely beaten or killed. A report from the Human Rights Watch (Human Rights Watch, 1997) states that in Uganda, the LRA tie children up and force them to carry looted goods. They receive very little food and are frequently beaten for no reason. Weak with hunger, sore from constant beatings and infected feet, many of the children struggle to keep up with the group, and are consequently killed by their captors. Those children who try to escape face barbaric repercussions. The rebels force new recruits to beat or stab these unsuccessful escapees to death, thus initiating them into the gruesome ways of the LRA (Dunson, 2002).

Children are also used as messengers and spies. One rebel commander stated that children are good spies, because they are young, small and inconspicuous, and nobody suspects them of spying (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001a). In guerrilla warfare this is important, as children are a significant link to the civilian population, whose overall support for the cause of the insurrection is vital. In Uganda in 1986, the National Resistance Army sent children into the capital to locate the government fortifications. When the bombing started, the children mingled with the fleeing crowds and hurled grenades at trucks carrying government soldiers (United Nations Children's Fund, 1996). While this may seem less life-threatening than hand to hand combat, it is in fact more dangerous, as it puts all children under suspicion. In a military sweep in Congo-Brazzaville, all the rebels who had attained the "age of bearing arms" were killed, including the children (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001a).

When children are not actively engaged in combat, they perform a variety of household duties, such as cooking, attending to the wounded, washing clothes, working in the gardens, hunting for wild fruit and vegetables, and looting food from gardens and granaries (Machel, 1996: 18). They are also often tasked to man checkpoints. Adult soldiers usually stand a few metres behind the barrier so that when shooting breaks out, it is the children who are the first victims (Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, 2001a).

As soon as they are strong enough to handle an assault rifle, normally at 10 years of age, children are used in combat. Because they are easily exploited and manipulated, they are often given the most dangerous assignments, including mine sweeps, suicide missions, shielding commanders on the battlefield, and extracting valuables from the deceased while under sniper fire. They are usually the first line of defence, drawing heavy fire and clearing the path for the regular forces (Human Rights Watch, 1997).

During raids in towns and villages, children are also ordered to loot, kill, amputate and mutilate. Abbas Fofanah, a 16-year-old Sierra Leonean, recollected the following when talking to Newsweek (Masland, 2002: 34):

"When we caught kamajors we would mutilate them by parts and display them in the streets. When villagers refused to clear out of an area we would strip them naked and burn them to death. Sometimes we used plastic and sometimes a tire ... I saw a pregnant women spilt open to see what the baby's sex was ... In Kabala I was forced to do amputations ... If you have a large number of amputated hands in the bag, the promotion will be automatic, to various ranks ... We gang-raped women, sometimes six people at a time. I didn't feel much because I was drugged ... I remember one tough operation. We killed people, we cooked them, we ate them and then we broke their pots."

Children are not only exploited for combat purposes – they are also victims of sexual abuse. Young abducted girls are treated as commodities to be traded and are often given as wives to commanders. In Sierra Leone and Uganda, the status of a male commander is directly proportional to the number of abducted girls he is given as wives (Wessels, 1997: 32).

The risks of these girls contracting sexually transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies are enormous. HIV, syphilis, gonorrhoea, infection, uterine deformation, vaginal sores, menstrual

complications, premature births, stillbirths, sterility, and death are some of the fates they suffer. Ordinary problems associated with pregnancy are also intensified by their affiliation to fighting forces. In Sierra Leone the RUF's delivery customs included jumping on the stomachs of pregnant girls and inserting objects into their vaginas to force the girls into labour, or tying their legs together to delay birth if the forces needed to move quickly. Babies often die because their mothers do not have access to proper health care during and after pregnancy – they are ignorant with regard to aspects of breast-feeding and infant care, and in conflict situations, malnourished, tired and untrained new mothers find it difficult to nourish and sustain their babies (Wessels, 1997: 32).

The previous discussion enables one to identify certain socio-economic factors that would render a state and society prone to the exploitation of child soldiers. These characteristics could be categorised as: high levels of poverty and hunger; poor medical and health conditions; poor educational systems and low literacy levels; and large numbers of refugees and uprooted people.

4.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

The motivation for becoming a soldier is found in the political, social and economic conditions directing the child's life. At present, it is disturbingly difficult to find African children who are not confronted with some form of dire social, political, cultural, or economic pressure (McIntyre, 2003: 94). Brett and McCallin (1996: 1) describe child soldiers as follows:

"Regardless of how they end up in armed forces, child soldiers share a remarkably similar profile. They come from poor and otherwise disadvantaged sectors of society. They are children of conflict zones. They are children whose families have been disrupted or lost entirely...They are mostly children without the protection of wealth, influence or adults. They are virtually defenceless against forcible recruitment and may actually welcome the protection which group membership offers. They are often children struggling to survive. The armed group represents a source of food and shelter. They are children for whom the culture of war is part of their daily lives."

4.3.1 Poverty and Famine

An investigation into the socio-economic situation in states using child soldiers reveals that conditions are desperate. As indicated in Chapter 3, poverty is endemic. The number of Burundians living below the poverty line has doubled to 60 percent since 1993. In some parts of the eastern DRC, people are subsisting on the equivalent of US\$0.18 per day, while 2.5 million people in Kinshasa live on less than US\$1 per day (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). Estimates of 1995/96 show that 45.5 percent of Ethiopia's population were living below the poverty line. (Government of Ethiopia, 2000: 4; Rose & Al-samarrai, 2001: 37). In Rwanda, 65 percent of the population are living below the poverty line, and in Sierra Leone the estimates are as high as 75 percent (Government of Rwanda, 2000: 3; Radio Netherlands Wereldomroep, 2000). In 1996/97 Somalia's GNP per capita was between US\$176 and US\$200 (United Nations Development Programme, 1999). In 1999, 80 percent of the displaced population in the Sudan's capital, Khartoum, were very poor and spent four-fifths of their income on food purchases that met only half of their nutritional needs (Anon, 2001b).

This is a stark picture, and it is getting even darker. Famine is widespread in these countries and magnifies the problems caused by war and poverty. Some 200 000 people in Kuito, in Angola's highlands, including 40 000 severely malnourished children, are entirely dependent on food aid (Ramsay, 2001: 41). According to Stokes *et al* (2000: 2093), malnutrition rates have increased and exceed the 5 percent alert threshold by far. Conflict and displacement in Burundi has killed 20 percent of the country's livestock, and crop production declined by 33 percent during 2000 (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). 16 million people in the DRC have critical food needs, and severe malnutrition among children under five has reached 30 percent in some areas (Global Issues, 2001b; Edgerton, 2001). In Sierra Leone, the minimum wage of those who have retained their jobs meets only 36 percent of staple food bills, and 80 percent of households, mostly headed by women, are unable to provide appropriate care for their children (Radio Netherlands Wereldomroep, 2000). At the end of 2000, an estimated 750 000 Somalis suffered from food shortages. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation reported that Somalis lacked one-third of the daily food intake normally needed and that 40 percent of the population in rural areas and sites for internally displaced people were malnourished (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). In August 2000, an estimated 2.4 million Sudanese needed food aid, and 25 percent of the residents in Upper Nile Province were suffering from malnutrition (Anon, 2001b). In 1999/2000, acute food shortages and lack of water as result of drought, were affecting significant areas of the northern and western parts of Uganda (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2001).

4.3.2 Health Conditions

Despite Africa making considerable improvements in the provision of health care, about 50 percent of all Africans nevertheless lack basic health care (Mulinge, 2002). Poor medical and health conditions pose an increased threat to the already poor and malnourished populations of the African continent. There are numerous examples of these deteriorating services. In the Angolan city of Kuito, one of the areas worst hit by the war, government provides only 1.2 percent of the central hospital's requirements (Anon, 2001a: 44). In Burundi, life expectancy has fallen from 53 years to 42, and infant mortality has increased by 17 percent since 1993 (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). In the DRC, at least 37 percent of the population – approximately 18.5 million people – have no access to any kind of formal health care and there is only one doctor for every 14 000 persons (Esterhuysen, 1998: 138; Global Issues 2001b). Only 51 percent of the Ethiopian population has any access to health services. Many health centres in Rwanda cover more than 30 000 inhabitants, and in certain districts large percentages of the population live more than one-and-a-half hours walk from these centres (Government of Rwanda, 2000: 34-35). At the end of 2000, virtually no health structures in Sierra Leone functioned outside government-controlled areas (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). It is estimated that only 10 to 30 percent of the population have access to adequate health services, and life expectancy for men and women is 39 years and 36 years respectively (Radio Netherlands Wereldomroep, 2000). In Somalia, a shattered national health system could not ward off high levels of tuberculosis, malaria, and gastrointestinal and other endemic diseases, particularly among children and women (United Nations Development Programme, 1999). Only a handful of hospitals and health clinics are functional in southern Sudan (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). In Uganda only 43 percent of the districts have any type of health facility and only 40 percent of the units have achieved a minimum staffing norm (Uganda Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, 2001).

HIV/AIDS has also left its legacy. More people have died of HIV/AIDS in 2000 than in all the wars on the continent in the past (Global Issues, 2001a). At the end of 1999, 360 000 adults and children were infected with the virus in Burundi and 230 000 children have lost mothers or both parents to the disease (while they were under the age of 15) (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2000: 3). In the DRC, between 800 000 and 900 000 children have been orphaned by HIV/AIDS (Global Issues 2001b). At the end of 1999, the preponderance of HIV/AIDS in Ethiopia was estimated at as high as 10.6 percent of the adult population. About 90 percent of these reported HIV/AIDS cases comprise adults between the ages of 20 and 49 (Government of Ethiopia, 2000: 20). A similar scenario is evident in Rwanda and Uganda (Jelinek, 2000).

4.3.3 Education

Although tremendous progress has been made in making access to basic education available to the general population, Africa's educational systems are often poorly developed and illiteracy is widespread. Years of war have taken its toll on both the educational systems and the educational infrastructures of countries. According to McIntyre (2003: 94) educational opportunities in Africa are limited and often non-existent. In Angola, many of the rural schools have closed down and the numbers of learners in secondary schools are low even by African standards (Esterhuysen, 1998: 79; Clover, 2002). In Burundi, nearly 400 schools (about 25 percent of the total schools in the country) have been demolished and school attendance has fallen by nearly 30 percent (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). In the DRC, four out of ten children do not attend school and 400 000 displaced children have no access to education (Global Issues, 200b). Less than 50 percent of Ethiopian children have access to primary schooling (Government of Ethiopia, 2000: 4; Rose and Al-samarrai, 2001: 36). In Somalia, only about a quarter of the adult population are literate (Esterhuysen, 1998: 309). This is also the pattern throughout Rwanda, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and Uganda.

4.3.4 Refugees and Displaced People

As to refugees, Africa is sheltering more than 13 million people uprooted by years of war, repression and civil unrest. It is estimated that close to a quarter of Angola's 13 million citizens have been internally displaced (Hawthorne, 2001: 28), whilst an estimated 600 000 Burundians were internally displaced by the end of 2000 (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). Prevailing war and human rights abuses forced up to one million Congolese to flee their homes during the course of 2000, bringing the total estimated number of uprooted persons to 2.1 million after two years of war (Global Issues, 2001b). More than 200 000 Rwandans were uprooted at the end of 2000 and between 1.4 and 2 million Sierra Leoneans were displaced at the end of 2000 – nearly half the country's total population. In Somalia, factional conflict, drought and floods displaced an estimated 20 000 people from their homes during 2000, adding to the nearly 700 000 Somalis uprooted in previous years. The conflict in the Sudan has left more than 4 million people uprooted – the largest internally displaced population in the world (Worldwide Refugee Information, 2001). Similar numbers are reported in Ethiopia and Uganda.

4.3.5 Effects on Children

What effect do these conditions have on children? The groups most affected by poverty and hunger are the unemployed and unskilled youths, as well as households headed by women and children. These are also the most vulnerable groups being targeted for recruitment into armed forces. Young boys working in the informal sector, selling cigarettes or sweets are often abducted without anyone missing them or enquiring about their whereabouts. Poor children may volunteer for service if they see this as a stepping-stone towards bidding farewell to poverty, because of the prospects of acquiring looted property. They may also perceive it as the only way to ensure regular meals, clothing and medical attention – thus, mere bread and butter reasons (Machel, 1996; Sesay *et al*, 2000). In Liberia in 1990, children as young as seven were fighting because they believed “those with guns could eat” (Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, 1994: 33). When survival is the major motivation, child combatants are unlikely to abandon their arms until they are certain that their basic needs are being met.

In addition, poverty and hunger often urge parents to offer their children for military service, especially when armies pay a minor soldier's wage directly to the family. In some cases parents even encourage their daughters to become soldiers if their marriage prospects are poor. Children from wealthier families are therefore at less risk of being recruited. They are often left undisturbed or are released if their parents pay a release fee. Some parents even send their children abroad to avoid the possibility of forced conscription (Machel, 1996). Well aware of these factors, recruiters target the areas where poor and unattached children gather – streets, marketplaces and townships.

Poor medical and health conditions also have far-reaching consequences for already vulnerable, poor, and defenceless children. Adult war victims often do not receive the necessary medical attention, and are consequently unable to return to the front line. This leads to the reduction of fighting forces and necessitates military commanders to exploit other reserves of human resources – children. The situation is aggravated when these war victims succumb from their wounds, leaving thousands of children orphaned. These children are homeless and defenceless and become easy prey for abduction and recruitment by military forces. Once they have been captured, they have a limited chance of being traced, of having someone to argue their rights, of proving their age or even bringing political influence to bear (Amnesty International, 2000a).

Since HIV/AIDS is the main cause of death among people aged 20 to 45 years, it is fast changing the demographic structure of Africa's population and severely reduces the pool of

potential adult military recruits. Once again, in the face of this dilemma, military forces will resort to the only source of manpower remaining – children. As increasing numbers of adults succumb to the disease, leaving thousands of orphans behind, it becomes even easier for armed forces to entice children into their ranks. These children are in desperate situations and see the armed forces as surrogate families and the commanders as parents.

Another tragic consequence of HIV/AIDS is the rejection of so-called “witch children” who are blamed for bringing evil forces into the family. Many such children end up on the streets, and joining a military group is their only route to possible survival (Morris, 2000: 211).

Education also plays a vital role in a child's development. In her report on the impact of armed conflict on children, Graça Machel (1996) states the following:

“Education is particularly important at times of armed conflict. While all around may be in chaos, schooling can represent a state of normalcy. School children have the chance to be with friends and enjoy their support and encouragement. They benefit from regular contacts with teachers who can monitor their physical and psychological health. Teachers can also help children to develop new skills and knowledge necessary for survival and coping, including mine awareness, negotiation and problem solving and information about HIV/AIDS and other health issues. Formal education also benefits the community as a whole. The ability to carry on schooling in the midst of difficult circumstances demonstrates confidence in the future: communities that still have a school feel they have something durable and worthy of protection.”

Primary schooling is essential in the development of children and the formation of social networks. It enables children to explore their surrounding environment in a controlled situation. It gives shape and structure to their lives and could instil community values, promote justice and respect for human rights, and enhance peace, stability and interdependence (United Nations Children's Fund, 1996b).

In conflict-ridden African states, the reality is in stark contrast with the above ideal condition. Most children do not have the opportunity to complete their primary schooling. This restricts the development of their identity and self-esteem, as well as the development of peer relationships, and renders them even more vulnerable for recruitment into armed forces. Where educational opportunities do exist, children are restrained from attending school. Parents are reluctant to

send their children to school, because of a lack of financial resources; they may need their children to work in order to contribute to the family economy; some fear that their children would be abducted on their way to or from school, and others are illiterate and do not comprehend the importance of education.

These children do not know their basic rights. They are at risk of recruitment or, through their innocence, may become receptive to ideological propaganda encouraging them to enlist. This sets a vicious cycle in motion. The further child soldiers fall behind their peers attending school and belonging to family structures, the more difficult it becomes to catch up, and consequently the easier it is to return to fighting. These children would develop no basic life skills nor receive vocational training and would be condemned to a life of fighting – not by choice, but out of desperation.

Furthermore, refugee camps are also fertile sources of large numbers of highly vulnerable and defenceless children, especially when these camps are located near borders or conflict areas. Circumstances in these camps are usually deplorable, and create the ideal environment for armed groups to abduct children without the knowledge of their parents or relatives. Orphans are even easier prey, as they are highly susceptible to any suggestion of “belonging”.

Refugee children are also at high risk of volunteering to become combatants, as joining an armed group sometimes appears as the better alternative to their present circumstances. The restrictions of life in a refugee camp could make an armed group appear very attractive to a restless child, and the promise of a sustained livelihood is a powerful lure in camps where poverty and hunger are overwhelming. Children are especially vulnerable when they are separated from their family members, and are easily transformed into fearsome and uncompromising soldiers.

4.4 SUMMARY

Although child soldiering is not a new phenomenon, it has never been as widespread and as serious as is currently the case in African states. Although children are not an obvious source of military manpower, they nevertheless become the only source of military manpower when the supply of adult recruits dwindles. They are easily abducted or recruited and transformed into little killing machines. Government forces and rebels alike are guilty of forceful recruitment and abduction of children. Government forces in African states include, amongst others, the FAA in Angola, the FAC in the DRC, the RPA in Rwanda, the UPDF in Uganda, the SLA in Sierra Leone and the AFL in Liberia. Rebel forces include UNITA in Angola, the MLC, RCD-ML and

RCD-Goma in the DRC, the CNDD-FDD, PALIPEHUTU-FNL and FROLINA in Burundi, the LRA in Uganda, the OLF in Ethiopia, all the factions involved in Somalia's civil strife, the RUF in Sierra Leone and the LURD in Liberia. The nature of these children's participation in war ranges from support roles, to active combat. They are exposed to atrocities, such as mass murder, torture and sexual abuse, and under the influence of drugs and alcohol they are often the perpetrators of such brutality, sometimes against their own family members.

The socio-economic conditions in states using child soldiers create an excellent breeding ground for children to be abducted or to volunteer as soldiers. Poverty is endemic; famine is widespread; medical and health conditions are deplorable; schools are closed or burnt down; and thousands of people are displaced. Having been exposed to such deplorable conditions, children are easily lured into taking up arms, believing that this is the only way to guarantee regular meals, clothing and medical attention. Many children also take up arms as a kind of safety net – faced with violence and chaos all around, they feel safer when armed. Refugees and uprooted children are also at high risk, especially when they are separated from their family members, receiving no food or basic care.

From the above discussion it is clear that certain factors which urge children to succumb to child soldiering are more closely related to the weak state phenomenon than others. For instance, there is a very strong correlation between the weak state phenomenon and poverty and famine, the collapse of educational and medical facilities, and large numbers of refugees and displaced persons. On the other hand, the correlation between the weak state phenomenon and various other factors is not as strong. These factors include the urge to seek revenge, the fun and adventure associated with wearing military gear and carrying arms, and the conviction to fight for social justice, religious beliefs, nationalistic and political ideology and cultural identity.

The contents of this chapter induces one to agree with Afua Twum-Danso (2003: 12) that "this deadly cocktail of violence, poverty and large numbers of disaffected youth does not bode well for the welfare and development of children, their communities, nations and the future."

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1 BACKGROUND

At the end of the Cold War there was a great deal of optimism about a new era of peace that would end the economic and social hardships of war and that would usher in an era of reduced military budgets and greater resources to invest in social programmes, such as the advancement of the cause of children. Instead, the opposite became reality, especially in Africa. The world was plunged into a decade of ethnic and civil wars characterised by deliberate violence against children on a vast scale. Indeed, it is quite possible that more children have suffered as a result of armed conflicts and violence during this period than at any other comparable period in history.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) grants children rights relating to their civil, political, economic and cultural lives. The Convention affords children the following rights: freedom from violence, abuse, hazardous employment, exploitation, abduction and sale; freedom from hunger and protection from diseases; access to free compulsory primary education; adequate health care; the right to know and be cared for by both parents; the right not to be separated from one's family; the right to registration, a name and a nationality from birth; the right to an identity and to preserve such an identity; equal treatment regardless of gender, race or cultural background; the right to express opinions and freedom of thought in matters affecting them; and safe access to leisure, play, culture and art. However, the deplorable circumstances in Africa's conflict ridden states deprive children of virtually every single one of these basic rights.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Children in Armed Conflict, Olara Otunnu (United Nations, 2000), is of the opinion that a three-way approach is needed to stem the present massive use of children as soldiers. Firstly, the age limit of recruitment and participation in armed conflict should be raised from 15 to 18. Secondly, international actors should pressurise armed groups exploiting child soldiers. Thirdly, the political, social and economic factors, which create an environment where children are impelled by some appeal of ideology or by socio-economic collapse to become child soldiers, should be identified and addressed. This thesis focused on the third aspect of Mr Otunnu's plea.

To the present day, governments, NGOs, policy makers and aid workers have tried to resolve the problem of child soldiering by attempting to prevent armed forces by means of various legal processes from recruiting children. Efforts were also made to demobilise and reintegrate these children into their communities. Such courses of action obviously only address the symptoms and not the causes of the problem. Hence a study of the characteristics of African states inclined to child soldiering is essential.

5.2 AIM AND MAIN FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study was to analyse the circumstances under which children are utilised as soldiers in Africa. This aim was divided into three subdivisions, namely to describe the type of states using children as soldiers, to analyse the conflicts in which child soldiers are utilised, and to describe the socio-economic conditions that impel children to take up arms.

An analysis of the child-soldier phenomenon suggests that it transpires in states exhibiting quite distinct characteristics. Accordingly, the study found the "weak state" theory applicable to its focus. The first characteristic of this type of state is that it experiences serious legitimacy challenges, manifesting themselves, amongst other things, in unstable politics, the centralisation of power in a ruling elite, low levels of national support for government, high levels of political disengagement by large segments of the population, and severe social divisions along ethnic and religious lines. This gives rise to another characteristic, namely the absence of one cohesive national identity, which is characterised by a tendency of citizens to associate with ethnic, racial and religious groups rather than with the state. The problems are furthermore exacerbated by the presence of local strongmen who oppose rulers and their efforts to mobilise the population and resources under their control. These states also exhibit high levels of institutional weakness, resulting in an inability from government's side to successfully implement policies, mobilise civil society, and monopolise the modes of legitimate organised violence. Formal economic structures are underdeveloped and operate parallel to very efficient informal markets, involving illegal business transactions and the exploitation of scarce resources, which render invaluable revenue to ruling elites and their protagonists. Furthermore, these states are vulnerable to external international forces and actors and its borders are open to arms smuggling and refugee movements. The last characteristic of specific importance in this study that is evident in these states, relates to the extensive exploitation of children as soldiers.

Logic then begs the question: what are the underlying causes leading to these states being labeled as weak? The study adopted Migdal's theory of weak states and fragmented social control as a reaction to this question. Migdal is of the opinion that its social structures and the

manner in which social control is distributed influence the abilities and nature of contemporary African states. In states where control is fragmented amongst various social organisations, rulers face immense challenges in establishing and enforcing effective policies. These social organisations and the social control they exert are the result of two sets of interconnected forces. The first was the historical expansion of the world economy from Europe, especially the taxation and transportation policies instituted at the time, which opened the way for European market penetration and rendered established survival strategies obsolete. Consequently, new patterns of social control started to surface, causing the various societies to act in different ways.

The second set of forces was the establishment of Western political domination by means of the structures of colonialism. Colonial rulers were in need of cheap, effective social control, which forced them to buy off local strongmen with tangible and intangible resources. As a web-like society with diverse poles of social power was more advantageous to the colonial objective of stability and security, the colonial powers distributed the resources amongst a selection of carefully considered local strongmen, consequently dividing the area and preventing the creation of a bond of local solidarity. Hence the colonialists significantly influenced the emerging configurations of social control, as they granted only a selected few of the local strongmen the opportunity to establish social control amongst fragments of society.

After independence, this fragmentation of social control was both a blessing and a curse to newly instated state leaders. On the down side, fragmentation posed immense challenges to these leaders, since they could secure only limited public support in the states they governed. The only way they could win this support was through the effective rendering of state services. This in turn called for a set of strong state agencies. Thus leaders had to have strong state agencies in place to induce political mobilisation and support in the relevant fragmented societies. On the other hand, the leaders also needed the support of the population so that those same strong state agencies would not threaten their political survival. This was state leaders' dilemma. As a result, they could follow one of two courses of action. They could either run the risk and proceed with institution building – whilst employing the politics of survival to prevent leading officials in important agencies from using their own capabilities against the central state leadership – or they could choose to diminish the immediate threat by relinquishing major institution building entirely.

However, state leaders' problems did not end here. They were also threatened by large social organisations outside of formal state institutions, which had a larger scope than that of indigenous strongmen. This challenge was managed by means of three different strategies,

namely the application of “dirty tricks”, the incorporation of these organisations into state institutions, and the strategy of “accommodating capital”.

On the upside, the same fragmentation of social control that prevented state leaders from developing the state’s mobilisational capabilities, also created a measure of stability by restricting the creation of common social identities comprehensive enough to develop into strong social organisations that could challenge state leaders’ rule.

Thus state leaders’ inability to manage the fragmentation of social control forced them to adopt very distinct political policies, which prevented the creation of strong, effective state institutions with the ability to mobilise the population and present new strategies of survival. In other words, it limited the accumulation of central state power, i.e. the process of state-making. As this process involves taxation, policing and the waging of war, the concentration of power in the hands of the agents of the state is of utmost importance.

Accordingly, the process of state-making was an unfamiliar notion to newly instated state leaders. Colonialism transferred the foreign concept of statehood to the continent without introducing the concept of nationhood as complementary to the state. It forced an artificial pattern of territoriality and sovereignty on Africans without any consideration for their specific political and institutional development. In addition, for some considerable period colonial powers excluded Africans from the political sphere and delayed the establishment of institutions of democratic politics until shortly before independence. Consequently, many states became independent without understanding the mechanisms of modern politics and state-building. As a result, independence only entailed the replacement of colonial rulers by local rulers, without any fundamental change in the character of the colonial state.

However, thanks to political events in the international arena, specifically the Cold War, state leaders could forego major state-building, without sacrificing their political tenure. Superpower patronage enabled them to bribe political opponents and to purchase weapons to suppress domestic opposition by local strongmen. The end of the Cold War and the consequent loss of international aid, however, implied the demise of these old forms of politics. This transformed weak state politics into a continuous cycle of crisis management.

Because of these events, state-making in many African states is presently still in its infant stages. Yet, the international state system and institutions do not accept the current state of affairs and are employing various mechanisms to pressurise weak state rulers to accelerate the process of state-making. Consequently, state leaders are compelled to embark on massive

state-building ventures, while managing internal threats from strong state institutions and local strongmen. In response to the above, leaders have adopted a number of social, political and economic strategies, which often hold significant risk of civil violence within these weak states. These strategies, together with the socio-economic conditions inside weak states, create the ideal circumstances for the incidence and continuation of war.

Poverty is a reliable predictor of conflict. It exacerbates underlying tensions in communities and states, and deprives governments of the means and the will to end conflict, as these tensions offer immense economic opportunities to all the warring parties. This sets the stage for weak state rulers to employ their survival strategies.

The first grouping of strategies entails exclusive politics, political centralisation and authoritarianism. It is achieved through violence and intimidation, the suppression of effective political participation, and the concentration of power, and particularly scarce resources, in the hands of a minority part of the population, with the objective of depoliticising the already fragmented society. As the state and its mechanisms symbolise wealth, a struggle for control of the state ensues. This was the case in Liberia, where the fragmentation of social control and the subsequent rise of political centralisation and authoritarianism led to a brutal civil war.

Closely related to the strategy of exclusive politics is ethnic politics. It could be traced to the colonial powers' practice of deliberately supporting some ethnic and religious groups at the expense of others. In the same vein weak state leaders often attempt to mobilise the population through appeals to ethnicity in order to establish the domination of their own ethnic groups. This creates continuing cycles of rebellion and repression, as the high premium placed on political power produces a zero-sum ethnic struggle for dominance. This was the case with the Banyamulenge in the DRC, the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda, and the Christians in the Sudan.

Weak state rulers also manipulate democratic processes and mechanisms in order to counter fragmented social control. This is achieved through the subtle, and sometimes open, creation of phoney opposition parties, the manipulation of election results, and the intimidation of the population. Democracy may also be used as a mechanism of suppressing minority ethnic groups, as was the case in the Sudan.

One of the most controversial survival strategies of weak state rulers is to utilise state resources and assets to buy the loyalty, or at least the compliance, of dominant groups in society. This often creates a blur between the collective and private interest of leaders. As a consequence,

they cease to render basic services to the wider population, as they no longer need to mobilise support for their cause. This engenders the deterioration of already weak state institutions, including the criminal justice system, which leads to other forms of patronage politics, such as racketeering, money laundering and organised crime. These arrangements transform patronage politics into trans-national alliances that generate profits in global markets. In order to counter these unacceptable levels of mismanagement and corruption, rebellions may be initiated, bringing about internal strife. However, these rebellions are more often than not only a smoke screen for warlords' and rebel leaders' attempts to seize control of the assets and resources of the state. A case in point is Sierra Leone where a succession of corrupt governments systematically excluded the population from the political and economic arena. This led to the creation of the RUF, which deteriorated into one of the fiercest and barbarous rebel armies in the world.

Self-serving state officials also manipulate state economic structures and policies. They monopolise enterprises, control prices and manipulate exchange rates and foreign trade in an attempt to accumulate wealth and to control and discipline rivals. In addition, creditor demands to privatise state agencies and liberalise markets are used to justify the outsourcing of a wide variety of economic roles to foreign firms. In reality these practices directly negate the liberal principles of private markets, since their intention is to prevent entrepreneurial activity among rivals. Rulers also develop special relationships with aid agencies that prefer to do business with rulers who claim internationally recognised state sovereignty, rather than attempting to build relations with competing local strongmen. This empowers weak state rulers to reject the risky strategy of authority building through effective state institutions capable of mobilising populations.

However, in order to employ all these economic strategies, rulers of weak states need one essential commodity – wealth-creating resources. The lack of effective state structures and institutions to build a healthy economy, leads them frequently to seize military control of scarce natural resources such as land, oil and minerals. Income received through the trading of these resources grant rulers the opportunity to build strong political networks, to buy the co-operation of key individuals, to fend off potential protagonists, and to enrich themselves, their families and their associates.

Yet, it is not only rulers who are interested in resources. Warlords and local strongmen also require resources to purchase arms to fight government forces and rival strongmen. As they often dispose of very limited financial resources, they also resort to the illegal exploitation of scarce resources. This leads to the formation of entrenched war economies. In the end then,

these wars, even if they initially have legitimate political claims, become a pretext to plunder natural resources for private enrichment.

The involvement of other states in these conflicts is significant, since it also indicates distinct undertones of business interests. This is the case in the DRC, where the political and military elites of Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Uganda and Rwanda have transformed the conflict into a business goldmine. This type of interventionism was also evident in Sierra Leone where the role played by Liberia's Charles Taylor may not be ignored.

Globalisation also contributes to the continuation of war, as it causes the deterioration of central authority, especially over the instruments of legitimate organised violence. This is the case when war economies attract external intervention from large private companies whose main objective is the extraction of resources. These international mercantilists are in a position to apply their immense economic resources to support and even determine the outcome of civil wars. They could even become protagonists through economic warfare and by using highly trained and well-armed private armies at their behest.

These conflicts – whether caused by poverty, political centralisation, authoritarianism, ethnic politics, the manipulation of democratic processes and mechanisms, patronage politics, the manipulation of state economic structures and policies, the struggle for scarce resources, the creation of war economies, or globalisation – all have very distinct characteristics. They occur in states where poverty and underdevelopment are widespread and where access to wealth-creating resources is uneven.

Furthermore, these wars are a deadly cocktail of war, organised crime and large-scale human rights violations. They involve the application of extreme, appalling and irrational forms of violence and brutality, targeting large groups of civilians. The protagonists include both states and non-state actors, such as paramilitary units, local warlords, criminal gangs, police forces and mercenary groups.

Another characteristic is the widespread use of child soldiers. Although the involvement of children in armed conflict is not a novel phenomenon, recent technological developments and the proliferation of small arms have made it possible for them to be exploited on a much larger scale and in more dangerous circumstances than ever before. Although children do not have the intellectual or physical maturity to make reliable fighters, they are easier to recruit and retain than adults. In times of prolonged warfare, illness and poverty, they are often the last reserve of able-bodied recruits.

All the armed groups in Africa's wars, including government armed forces, paramilitary groups and armed opposition groups, are to a greater or lesser extent guilty of recruiting, forcefully conscripting, press-ganging and deploying child soldiers. Children are arbitrarily seized from streets, schools and orphanages and are subjected to varying degrees of indoctrination through processes that use fear, brutality and psychological manipulation to convert them into killers. Efforts by children to resist are severely punished with physical assault, retaliation against the children's family members and ultimately death. Children are also forced to commit atrocities in their own villages, effectively preventing them from ever returning to their homes and families.

A large number of children also present themselves for service. Some may be urged to take up arms for their own protection. Others have grown up with violence and regard it as a permanent way of life. There are also those who are attracted by the prospect of fun and adventure and others who have active or personal reasons for fighting.

Children perform a variety of military-related and household tasks. They are used as porters, messengers, guards and spies. They also cook, attend to the wounded, do washing and work in the gardens. As soon as they are strong enough to handle an assault rifle, they are used in combat to loot, kill, amputate and mutilate. In addition, they are used as sex slaves.

States using child soldiers all exhibit similar socio-economic characteristics. Poverty is endemic. Famine is widespread and magnifies the problems caused by war and poverty even further. The provision of medical and health care is insufficient because of the vast number of war wounded and the destruction of hospitals and clinics. This is aggravated by the high numbers of HIV/AIDS sufferers. Schools are destroyed, educational systems are often poorly developed and illiteracy is widespread. In addition, due to years of war and civil unrest, millions of people are displaced and forced to become refugees.

These socio-economic characteristics create the ideal breeding ground for the recruitment of child soldiers. Recruiters usually target areas where poor and unattached children congregate, such as streets, marketplaces and townships. Poor children also often volunteer for service, since they perceive it as the only way to ensure regular meals, clothing and medical attention.

Furthermore, the shortage of proper medical and health services leads to an increase in war casualties and HIV/AIDS related deaths. This causes a reduction in the number of fighting force members and the consequent escalation of child recruitment. It also causes an increase in the

number of homeless and defenceless war-orphans who become easy prey for abduction and recruitment.

Education plays a critical role in times of conflict. The lack of proper educational systems and infrastructure restricts the development of children's cognitive thinking, their identity and self-esteem, as well as the development of peer relationships. Illiterate children are vulnerable for recruitment, since they are not aware or informed of their basic rights and are often receptive to ideological propaganda.

Refugee children are also easy prey for recruiters. The circumstances in refugee camps create the ideal conditions for children to be abducted without the knowledge of their relatives. These children also often volunteer for service, as the prospects of a sustained livelihood are a powerful lure in refugee camps where poverty and hunger are overwhelming.

5.3 SUCCESS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

It was the assumption of this thesis that there is a correlation between the inherent characteristics of certain African states and their use of child soldiers. In order to establish the accuracy of this assumption, the study drew comparisons between the different states that utilise child soldiers. It identified the characteristics of these states and described what these entailed in terms of the exploitation of child soldiers. Accordingly the study accepted the "weak state" theory, which indicates that conflicts are exacerbated by a particular form of politics, which is in turn embedded in the structures of weak states and the actions of weak state rulers. The study indicated that the practice of child soldiering is an important characteristic of these conflicts. In addition, the prevalence of unfavourable socio-economic conditions within these states urges children to become soldiers. Thus the above assumption is valid, since there is indeed a correlation between the characteristics of these African states and the use of child soldiers.

One should, however, note that comparisons were drawn between a comparatively large number of states. This implies that the individual characteristics of the various states may have been scaled down in order to highlight the similarities. Hence it would be erroneous to assume summarily that the characteristics identified in the study are the only characteristics of these states or that the similarities would be totally comparable in terms of the degree to which they are present in the various states. Accordingly – as a separate exercise – it may be advisable to examine the various states, or even regions, separately in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their specific characteristics.

The most significant weakness of this study is the absence of primary fieldwork. Although the available research and data were comprehensively studied and incorporated, fieldwork would have added enormously to the insight of the researcher and the validity and accuracy of the study. Yet, because of practical constraints, this was not a feasible option.

5.4 RELEVANCE OF THE THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

The theoretical concepts defined and used in the study were meaningful and relevant. However, there are some minor discrepancies that should be mentioned. Although the concept weak state was used as a general term to describe a very specific type of state in Africa, it should be noted that it is not totally applicable to all the states. For instance, it would be more appropriate to describe Somalia as a failed state. In addition, all the states do not experience the same level of weakness. However, to distinguish between weak states and weaker states would have been beyond the scope of this study and would in any event not have made a significant difference to the aim and main findings. Furthermore, although Migdal's theory that weak states are caused by fragmented social control is regarded as a highly applicable explanation for this phenomenon, it is not necessarily the only explanation. Hence, if the scope of the study allowed it, it would have been useful to explore other theories and explanations.

Nonetheless, there is no doubt that the weak state-theory has profound implications for conflict resolution and more specifically for the ending of the utilisation of child soldiers. It is a useful analytical tool that assists in organising and understanding the literature on internal conflict, as well as child soldiering.

The manner in which the concept conflict was defined and used in this study was relevant, since it referred to all the various types of warfare, including conventional warfare, low-intensity guerrilla-style warfare, factional warfare, genocide and ethnically based conflict.

The concept child soldier, as defined in this study, is generally regarded as the acceptable term when referring to children who participate in conflict, whether in support roles or active combat. However, one should note that, although it is a widely accepted term, it may nevertheless be incorrect. When one analyses the various definitions of the term soldier (as was done in Chapter 1), one finds that child soldiers seldom comply with the criteria. Accordingly, it may be more accurate to refer to these children as fighters or combatants.

5.4 LESSONS LEARNT

"In conclusion, one may reflect on the issue of 'child soldiers' based on two main factors. The first is the underlying cause of conflict, as opposed to the impact and end result of the conflict. There is little point in pouring resources and effort into damage control when the cause of the problem itself continues unabated, as is the current approach. The second is to address both the social and the economic issues that face these families and communities in the struggle for survival, and in their attempts to integrate abducted children back into society. Addressing only one side of the same coin will result in partial solutions that are inherently flawed. While those involved in the counselling programme[s] are to be commended, the complete absence of preventive measures is to be lamented" (Stavrou et al, 2000: 63).

This study did not revolve around finding solutions, but rather sought a better comprehension of the problem of weak states that create conflicts and the deplorable socio-economic conditions within which children become soldiers.

This study indicated that no single event or entity is solely to blame for the problems challenging weak states. The widespread practice of political bribery, corruption, and the establishment of patron-client networks, could all be attributed to a number of contributing factors. These factors include the following: the influence of colonialism; Cold War patronage and globalisation; a breakdown in normal politics; the rise to power of corrupt leaders; the absence of effective institutions to check the abuse of power and ensure administrative accountability; and most importantly, class action necessitated by the weak financial standing of the ruling elites. The latter factor generally assists in unifying the ruling class to focus their efforts on the state; it prohibits the political organisation of the subordinate classes by emphasising their ethnicity and isolation; it aids in the extraction and accumulation of resources and capital, as control of the political apparatus guarantees control over production; and the ruling elite is able to build a strong political base while manipulating the allocation of resources. In addition, international financial institutions and aid organisations are contributing to the problem through their demands for liberalisation and their relationships with weak state rulers.

Thus it becomes clear that the only way to overcome these challenges is to re-establish legitimacy and to reconstruct the control of organised violence by local, national and global public authorities. This entails political as well as legal processes, and includes the rebuilding of

trust in, and support for, public authorities, and the re-establishment of the rule of law within which public authorities can operate.

Furthermore, preventing armed forces and rebel groups from exploiting children, requires much more than the ratification of international protocols and conventions, the passing of supportive laws and policies, and the political will to implement them. What is required is a comprehensive approach, which acknowledges the political and socio-economic dilemmas discussed in this study and which deals with them systematically and above all efficiently. African governments need to build effective state institutions, strive to alleviate poverty, create employment opportunities, end economically crippling practices, socially and economically provide for AIDS orphans, and end civil wars. Most importantly, one has to agree with McIntyre (2003: 99) that governments and international organisations have to realise that children are not merely a "special interest group" but in reality constitute the majority of the African people. Only then would these organisations and governments be in a position to create enabling environments for the implementation of the laws and policies that have been put in place and could make a impact on children's rights.

In conclusion, the wisdom of Dostoyevsky (1880: 291):

"Imagine that you are creating a fabric of human destiny with the object of making men happy in the end, giving them peace and rest at last, but that it was essential and inevitable to torture to death only one tiny creature ... and to find that edifice on its unavenged tears, would you consent to be the architect of those conditions? Tell me, and tell the truth."

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